



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2015

President's Report

It is back to work at the Hospital Museum. We were very lucky in the aftermath of cyclone Marcia. Our building was not damaged though we had a small amount of water which came through a window. Fortunately there was no damage to any important documents.

With the Q ANZAC 100 commemoration of the centenary of World War 1, we have a wonderful display at the museum which focuses on the nurses who trained in and around Rockhampton and then enlisted in World War 1. There is a lot of information about each nurse which has been thoroughly researched and presented by Ashley Reid. It is a great comprehensive collection. We encourage all of you to come and peruse the WW1 collection of information, and the model of a nurse in her World War One uniform and think about how we would work in that today.

We continue to build our database of all nurses who trained at the Rockhampton Hospital. The data has been recorded since 1885 and continues to progress. This an ongoing project.

Our Library collection continues to evolve with both Janet Iffinger and Errol Payne working on this project and recording and labelling all Medical and Nursing books which will enable research to be undertaken in the future. Our Museum has a computer system which is specially designed for the maintenance of all records and information about the museum collection which includes people, objects, places, books, etc and all data is entered by our dedicated members with the plan that in years to come when people look for family history information, we will have the ability to locate that information.

Our Tuesday morning group of willing workers all have their specific tasks which they do really well and they all enjoy a great morning tea and a good chat. We appreciate their time and efforts.

Council workers and volunteers are busy with the work to complete a sandstone wall in front of the museum and finish the hanging of the Sandrock Gates which formed part of the fence at the Rockhampton Hospital. When this task is finished we plan to have a function to celebrate this improvement to our museum precinct.

Once again, members of our Management Committee are active in the group which is planning celebrations for International Nurses Day in 2015. This year the celebrations will take the form of a luncheon at the Rockhampton Leagues Club between 11:00 am and 2:30 pm on 17th May. There will be two guest speakers and Ashley will have a display about the World War 1 nurses. More information can be found on our website www.achha.org.au.

My grateful thanks to the committee members for their untiring work in maintaining the museum and continually advancing the work on the museum collection.

Encourage your family and friends to visit the museum. It is open every day and it is well worth having a look at the static display and memorabilia from the past.

Lorraine Antonello
President

Our website to be archived in perpetuity

We were very pleased to receive correspondence from the State Library of Queensland seeking permission for our website to be archived in the Pandora Project which is managed by the National Library of Australia.

The State Library has the task of preserving the documentary heritage of Queensland including online publications and websites which include information "of lasting significance". Our website www.achha.org.au has been selected as being one which incorporates such information which should not be lost in the future.

What this means is that the National Library of Australia will periodically copy our website to the Pandora Archive in order to provide public access in perpetuity no matter what happens to our Association.

You may view our website on the National Library's Pandora website as it was on 12th January 2015 at this address:

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/tep/149853>

Two links on the website take you to either the archived version or the current "live" version.

Tribute to Dr Conrad Primmer OAM



We were saddened to hear of the death of our Association’s Patron, Dr Conrad James Primmer OAM MBBS (Qld), FRCOG on 10th December 2014. Dr Primmer was a distinguished Specialist Obstetrician and Gynaecologist who served the people of Rockhampton and the wider Central Queensland area for many years. This tribute is based on our general knowledge of his life and work but also draws on two information sources in our Country Hospital Museum Collection – an autobiography “An Undistinguished Student” which he prepared for his children and grand-children on the occasion of his 80th birthday in 2004, and an oral history interview conducted by Dr Tom Dewar on 3rd June 2003.

Con Primmer was born in Alderley, Brisbane, on 24th March 1924. He was the youngest in a family of eight children but had just one full brother, Jack, who was eighteen months older than he was. He writes of an interesting childhood since the area where they lived was full of bushland and a creek where they could catch yabbies. However, his mother and father both worked to run their pie stall in Brisbane which opened from 6 pm to 5 am. Add to this the time to travel back and forth to their home in Alderley, clean up and prepare the food for the next night, they had very little time available. While his older step-sisters took good care of him, there were times when he was boarded out with other families. He also boarded at St George’s Anglican Home for about 3 years from age 6 or 7. His mother visited him regularly and he was able to spend some weekends at home. Here he learnt some new useful skills because the children were expected to work around the farm before school. Later his parents were able to buy a two storey house next to the pie stall so the family came back together. Con was able to assist with the stall but as soon as things quietened down his mother sent him upstairs to study.

On completing his primary schooling, he did Junior at Brisbane Grammar School before working as a messenger boy and then as a junior employee in the Taxation Department. He earned extra money after school selling newspapers. Young people at that time would ride the trams backward and forward through the Valley selling newspapers to the commuters.

Forthcoming 2015 Rockhampton Heritage Village Events

Sunday 10th May 2015

Mothers Day Markets

Sunday 14 June 2015

Heritage Festival

Sunday 12 July 2015

Market Day

Sunday 13th September 2015

Market Day

Sunday 29th November 2015

Christmas Markets

Please take the opportunity to visit our Museum during these events. While the Museum is open daily, it is on Market Days that members of the Association will be on hand to help you with any enquiries and discuss the displays in more detail.

Association Membership

The Association welcomes your support for our activities. We operate on a normal financial year (July—June) and new memberships paid now will be credited to the 2015-2016 financial year.

If you wish to join our Association, application forms are available from Committee members, from the Museum, from the Contact us page of our website

www.achha.org.au

or by emailing secretary@achha.org.au

Please make cheques payable to Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc. and post to ACHHA Inc, Box 4035, Rockhampton Qld 4700 or pay by direct deposit to our Westpac Membership Account BSB 034-210 Account No. 23-3836. To enable us to identify you, please use your family name plus Mem (for membership). Any of the Committee members listed on the final page will be pleased to assist you.

Membership Fees

Annual

Individual \$20.00

Couple \$30.00

Life

Individual \$200.00

Couple \$300.00

Donations

The Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc (ABN: 86 751 554 596) is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, please pay as above or by direct deposit to our Museum Account BSB-034-210 Account No. 23-3844. Please identify yourself by your family name plus Don (for donation) and make sure that we have

At age 17, he joined the Australian Navy, undertaking his basic training at *HMAS Cerberus* near Melbourne. While training he broke his wrist and this delayed his full entry into naval duties. Most of his service was spent on smallish vessels called corvettes. These had crews of 70 to 80 and their prime role was to escort transport ships around the Australian coast, protecting them from enemy mines and submarines. Later in the war his ship, *HMAS Ipswich*, was transferred to British command and performed similar duties in other countries.

When Japan surrendered, *HMAS Ipswich* was 100 miles from Tokyo and they were sent into Tokyo Bay to make sure it was free from hazards such as mines before other ships entered. *HMAS Ipswich* was in Tokyo Bay when the peace treaty was signed on board the *USS Missouri*. He recounts that one of their special tasks was to transfer American officers between American naval ships and British ships because American ships were "dry".

He was greatly saddened during the war when his brother Jack was lost in the sinking of the *HMAS Sydney*.

Con was discharged from the navy in 1946 and went back to his old job in the Taxation Department. However, the Government put in place a number of schemes to support those who had served in the war and Con set off on the path to his degree in Medicine. Because he had not studied French for junior he first had to complete this subject and then completed senior English, Mathematics I, Physics and Chemistry in one year in order to matriculate to university. He started his medicine degree at the University of Queensland in 1948 and completed it in 1953. He lived at Union College. He was an excellent rugby union player and represented Australia against the All Blacks. His playing career was ended by a serious knee injury. However, his coaching career continued very successfully.

In 1954 he started his medical career as a Resident Medical Officer at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. This year marked another major milestone because he and Cecily, a nurse whom he had met at the Hospital Post Office, were married. Over the years their family grew to include seven children.



Con and Cecily Primmer at the opening of the Country Hospital Museum in November 2009.

After practising for a time in Clifton, near Toowoomba, Con and Cecily moved to Esk in 1956 where he was

Superintendent of the hospital with right of private practice. While working in Esk he developed an increasing interest in obstetrics and gynaecology and in 1959 travelled to the United Kingdom with Cecily and their three children to undertake his specialist studies in obstetrics and gynaecology. They returned to Australia in 1962. Con travelled as an assistant Ship's Doctor which gave him free passage plus one pound a week stipend.

After their return to Australia, Con received a letter from Drs Gold and Gibbons inviting him to join them in Rockhampton. Initially he was in general practice for three years. However, during this time other doctors referred many of their maternity patients to him and his specialist practice slowly built up. Drs Gold and Gibbons both left Rockhampton to further their studies and Con went out on his own as a Specialist Obstetrician and Gynaecologist in about 1966. When Dr Ted Hasker died in 1964, Con became the visiting obstetrician at the General Hospital. This was a very busy time for him and he was pleased when Dr Tom Dewar arrived in 1970 and they were able to share the workload.

Ever keen to bring the benefits of new technology to his patients, he introduced the use of laparoscopy in 1967/1968 and ultrasound in 1975. While his first ultrasound machine was too big to move, his second one was smaller and he was able to take it with him to smaller communities such as Emerald and Biloela. Later in his career he concentrated almost totally on ultrasound.

Con was very active in the community. He was in Rotary for 15 years and on the Board of the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School for 21 years, six as Chair. He was instrumental in developing rugby union in Rockhampton from about 1968 and has a rugby field named after him.

He was awarded an OAM in the Australia Day Honours list in 1994 "*For service to the community*" as well as a Centenary of Federation Medal on 1st January 2001 for "*Distinguished service to the community*".

Our Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association was a beneficiary of his specialist knowledge and community interest. Our Collection was initially displayed in the Base Hospital Museum at the Rockhampton Hospital. When this was forced to close because of the redevelopment needs of the Hospital, Con was instrumental in developing the idea of a medical presence at the Rockhampton Heritage Village. He led a steering committee of senior medical, dental and nursing staff which formed the Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association in 1998. Under his leadership as President, negotiations with the Rockhampton City Council led ultimately to the official opening of the Country Hospital Museum in November 2009. When Con retired as President of our Association in 2002, he accepted the position of Patron, a position which he held up until his death.

As we attend the museum on a typical Market Day, we frequently hear women who see Con's photograph make the comment "*He delivered my children*". Perhaps this is his greatest accolade. Con is survived by his wife Cecily and their seven children and their families.

Australian Army Nursing Service in World War One Local Nurses – Who were they?

Ashley Reid

Early in 2014 Queensland began promoting the “Q ANZAC 100 Memories for a New Generation” program to commemorate The Centenary of World War One (WW1) throughout 2014-2018.

As a small Country Hospital Museum wishing to contribute to the Q ANZAC 100 Project, a decision was made to focus on identifying and honouring the local nurses who trained at local hospitals, enlisted and served their country in WW1.

The period 1914-1918 was a time when Matron Christmas was Matron of the Rockhampton General Hospital, previously known as the Port Curtis & Leichhardt District Hospital, the City of Rockhampton had only been proclaimed 12 years earlier and electricity had been connected to Rockhampton 16 years earlier.

Who were these nurses? Where did they serve? What Awards and Decorations did they receive? What stories did they write home? What of their life Post War?

These questions have resulted in a year-long search and as names on a piece of paper grew and stories of their experiences were uncovered it did not take long for the names to become “real people”. The need now was to find evidence.

Choosing a limited geographical area allowed the opportunity to explore archived records held at the Rockhampton Country Hospital Museum of nurse training at the Rockhampton Hospital from 1885. The area chosen to find our local nurses included Rockhampton, Gladstone, Calliope, Raglan, Mount Morgan and Yaamba.

Throughout 2014 many resources were searched to provide evidence of nurse training, enlistment and war service. These included the Australian Country Hospital Museum Archives, as well as many websites which included but was not limited to the Australian War Museum, Queensland State Archives, and Embarkation Rolls.

Articles found in newspapers stored on TROVE and books such as “Queensland Nurses Boer War to Vietnam” written by Rupert Goodman and “More Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War 1” by Kirsty Harris 2011 offered many insights not only into the service records of these remarkable nurses but also the hardships they endured.

The result of the research has shown thirty two nurses trained locally and served in WW1. The list below shows the names of all of these nurses. Perhaps as you read through these lists you may recognise a family name to follow up. This has already happened at least once so far in the case of one of our volunteers at the Museum. Perhaps you may have information or photo-

graphs that you would be prepared to share with us. Though the research has been very thorough, there is still the chance that you know someone that we may have missed. Our mail and email contacts are included on the final page of this Newsletter as well as the names of all of our committee members.

Seventeen nurses trained at the Rockhampton General Hospital and served in the Australian Army Nursing Service:

Rosamund Brenda Atherton
Trissie Bailey
Beryl Anderson Campbell
Caroline Rose Griffiths
Alice Ethel Imison
Margaret Elizabeth Jones
Jessie Violet Marion Kennedy
May Agnes Maloney
Mary Theresa Martin
Elsie Kate McLaughlin
Catherine Monkton
Margaret Frances Murray
Ellen Agnes Norton
Violet May Phillips
Mary Clare Price
Catherine Annie Toft
Edith Mary Toft

One Rockhampton Hospital trained nurse served in the British Queen Alexandra Imperial Reserve Nursing Service. (Many Australian nurses anxious to enlist and serve King and country paid their own way to England and enlisted in the British Army.)

Annie Isobel Brizzell

Five nurses trained at the Rockhampton Children’s Hospital.

Margaret Halpin
Helen Lawson
Louisa Sarah Parnell
Elizabeth Parker
Greta Norman Towner

Two nurses trained at the Rockhampton Women’s Hospital.

Ellen Barron
Sarah Kellaway

Six nurses trained at the Mount Morgan Hospital.

Grace Ethel Homewood
Martha May Homewood
Myra Alexandra McClelland
Ella Gordon McIlwraith
Annie Norton
Margaret Ayrane Perrier

One nurse trained at the Gladstone Hospital.

Florence Herbertson

A further thirteen nurses were found to have had Pre-War links to the local area but trained elsewhere while another nine nurses with no known pre-war links were

found to have worked in the local area after the war. The number of locally trained nurses who enlisted is even more remarkable when we know that the Yeppoon Hospital and Tannachy were not established until after the war, and Hillcrest may not have been a training hospital at the time.

Copies of photographs, nurse training and war service records along with letters home have been shown in static Spyder board displays during 2014 at the Country Hospital Museum to coincide with ANZAC Day. They have also been shown at the Rockhampton International Nurses Day function held at the CQ University in May, the Senior Nurse's Forum Day held at the Rockhampton Hospital in early September and at the Rockhampton Hospital on Remembrance Day.

The response to these displays has led to further requests to show the information during 2015. A display was shown at the CQ Family History Association "Commemorating WWI Day" in April, and will be shown at the International Nurses Day function to be held in Rockhampton in May, Anzac Day at the Rockhampton Hospital and a selection of material will assist Hillcrest Private Hospital as they also seek to remember and honour the service of these nurses.

A more extensive display has now been set up at the Country Hospital Museum and will be in place for the duration of 2015. We hope all of our members and others who hear about the display from other sources will take the opportunity to visit the display.



Overview of part of the nurses in World War 1 display on show at the Country Hospital Museum. Apart from the printed information, the display includes a nurse in uniform, a patient on a mobile stretcher and a model of an evacuation tent.



Display of information and photographs at the Country Hospital Museum.

Without the space limitations of a newsletter, a great deal more information about each nurse may be found on our Australian Country Heritage Hospital Association Inc. website (www.achha.org.au). We hope that many of you will take advantage of this source to learn more about these remarkable women.

In the Newsletter, we only have space to tell the story of one nurse – Alice Ethel Imison, a Rockhampton Hospital trained nurse who had the dedication to enlist in two World Wars.



Alice Imison in uniform (Photograph courtesy family donation by Janice Marshall.)

Miss Imison was born in Laidley, Queensland, in 1893 and trained at the Rockhampton Hospital from January 1914 until January 1917. She enlisted in August 1917 as an AANS Staff Nurse and sailed from Sydney on the "Anchises" on 8th August 1918. She served in the Kangaroo Point Hospital in Brisbane and in Bombay India and Lahore Pakistan. She returned to Australia in October 1919 on the "Marathon" and was discharged medically unfit in February 1920. She travelled back to England where she married Captain Charles Woolsey of Shepherd's Bush in London on 3rd July 1920.

In September 1933 the General Nursing Council of England and Wales admitted **Alice Ethel Woolsey** as a Registered Nurse. This allowed her to enlist in World War Two in 1940 and serve with Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service where she was posted to France. Following the fall of France in 1940 she was evacuated from Dunkirk earning her a Royal Red Cross Medal. From 1940 - 1945 she served in Egypt, Lebanon, Italy and Belgium and was released from Service in August 1948 being granted honorary rank of *Sister* by the War Office. Alice returned to Australia in 1972 and died ten years later at age 88 years. Her Ashes were interred in the War Service Memorial at the Albany Creek Crematorium, Brisbane.

In December 2014 the Country Hospital Museum was honoured to receive a donation of all Nursing Certificates, badges, Service Medals, photographs, original documents, including a hand written letter from King George VI, and letters home. It is such a privilege for us to be entrusted with these personal and valuable pieces of history.

Nurses played many roles. A large proportion served in special hospitals in places such as England, France, Greece, Belgium and Egypt as well as in Australia. Some of these hospitals were temporary and were very close to the frontlines. At least 13 nurses were decorated for their service. Quite a number worked in hospital ships which ferried the most seriously injured soldiers home.

Our research revealed that some nurses in addition to Alice Imison returned overseas after the war, but most stayed in Australia. Many married, in some cases to soldiers whom they may have met during the war. It is notable that many who returned to nursing served in senior roles. At least eleven served at the level of Matron or similar. In addition, many of those who came to our area after the war were here to fill roles as Matrons. Despite the hardships they had faced, most lived into old age.

Perhaps the greatest outcome from this project would be an increased awareness of the legacy of caring left by these nurses to current students and members of the local nursing profession.

In 2015, it may seem difficult to understand the fervour with which our young men and women offered themselves in defence of our country and our allies in a war which must have seemed quite remote, given the means of transport and communication available then. Nurses were a special subset of the volunteers because they were older than many of the other volunteers, and were required to have completed a qualification.

To enlist, nurses were required to be between twenty-one and forty years of age, single, or widowed, have not less than three years' training and service in Medical and Surgical nursing in a duly recognized civil General Hospital. A duly recognized civil General Hospital was taken to mean a hospital of eighty or more beds, in which lectures were systematically given to the Nurses. *She* had to be of British parentage or a naturalized British subject. No male nurses in 1914! Nurses were retired at fifty five years of age but this could be extended for a further two years.

Candidates for enlistment were medically examined and while no standard height or weight was required they had to be of sound health and "capable of doing hard work and undergoing fatigue." Pledging to serve King and Country nurses also pledged to maintain the honour and efficiency of the Australian Army Nursing Service.

Once enlisted they were required to attend annual In-service lectures and show efficiency in First Aid having attended 3 out of 4 lectures on Organisation of a Military Hospital, Hygiene and Military Surgery. Who said In-service and Mandatory Training were new initiatives!

Ashley Reid
April 2015

Association contact details:

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Vice-President: Ashley Reid
Secretary: Errol Payne
Treasurer: Kay Smith

Archivist: Yvonne Kelley

Committee Members

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Del Leitgeb
Carol Mclver
Bill Mclver
Jocelyn Philp
Christine Putman
Norma West