



Newsletter

December 2011

### ***President's Report***

Elections for the positions on the ACHHA Management committee were held in October, and the new committee structure can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. My congratulations and welcome to members of the new committee.

I continue as President, and I thank members for again electing me for a further year. It is more fulfilling if belonging to an organisation, to be involved in the overall management, and I appreciate this ongoing opportunity afforded me.

Through personal and work commitments, Debbie has elected not to seek nomination again this year. I thank Debbie for her input over the past years, and welcome her offer to continue in the role of Curator, and to continue working on the school tour project. With Debbie and Lorraine as Curators and Yvonne as Archivist, the collection is in safe hands.

I welcome Nancy Crapp to the ACHHA committee as our new member. Nancy's main area of interest is the Operating Theatre, an area of great interest to visitors.

The Committee has received the much awaited Significance Assessment document which identifies and groups all collections and sub collections and rates their significance in Historical terms. This document will be used in our future planning as a basis to value add to the collections.

Our last meeting for the year in early December is to be a planning meeting where needs and funding will be identified. The emphasis at the moment is in the Archive area, and there is much to be done in sorting and recording of documents and photos.

A date claimer for 2012 is the 12<sup>th</sup> May. This is International Nurses Day, and an exciting program is already being planned. Part of this celebration will

be an invitation for nurses to write short anecdotal stories of experiences they may have had with regards hospital training or experiences of living in Nurses' Quarters. Relevant stories will appear in this Newsletter, and copies will be kept at the Museum.

School tours continued through out this quarter, guided by members of the committee. There is a need for more volunteers to help on these days, as the groups can be large, and at least three people are needed for the guiding. Please let me, or another member know if able to assist.

The favourable and enthusiastic Comments in our Visitors Book indicate that the Hospital Museum is more than appreciated by the Visitors, and adds to the satisfaction of all that are involved in its progress.

My best wishes go to all ACHHA Members, families and friends for much happiness and health over Christmas and during 2012, and continued involvement in ACHHA.

***Norma West***  
***President***

#### ***Did you know?***

That the first meeting of the Rockhampton Hospitals Board took place at 2:30 pm on Monday 23rd November 1925 in the School of Arts building. This is where your management committee normally meets each month.

The Board took charge of the General Hospital, the Women's Hospital, the Children's Hospital, the Yeppoon Hospital and the Emu Park Convalescent Home and rapidly set about moving all Rockhampton facilities to the Canning & North Street site.

### **Significance Assessment of the Collection**

Perhaps the most important activity undertaken by the Association this year has been the significance assessment of the collection. This was made possible by a \$4,400 Community Heritage Grant from the National Library of Australia. In "academic" terms, a significance assessment may be described as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*"The process of studying and understanding the meanings and values of an item or collection, enabling sound and reasoned statements and judgements about the importance of items and collections, and their meanings for communities. The outcomes of a significance assessment should guide decisions made about the management of an item or collection into the future."*

The National Library provides funding to enable an organization to employ an outside person to carry out the process. In our case, the assessment was conducted by Ms Bronwyn Roper, the Central Queensland Museum Development Officer for the Queensland Museum, who worked closely with our Archivist Mrs Yvonne Kelley. The overall significance assessment document which has been forwarded to the National Library is 37 pages in length. Here we reproduce the one page Executive Summary for the information of our members.

*"The Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association collection consists of archival and three-dimensional objects which document the history of Rockhampton Hospitals, the history of nurse training in Central Queensland and the history of regional and rural health care service delivery throughout Australia.*

*The majority of the collection is housed in the former Mt Morgan Nurses Quarters which has been relocated to the Rockhampton Heritage Village, a site owned and operated by the Rockhampton Regional Council. The collection is managed by an executive committee and group of dedicated volunteers who form The Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association.*

*The volunteer group consists of current and former health care professionals. The focussed collection consists of between 8000 and 10,000 archival records, around 3000 photographs of building and personnel, over 100 oral history interviews with health care professionals, more than 50 rare and original uniforms dating back to 1918, a set of Rockhampton Hospital Annual*

*Reports from 1873 onwards which are in all likelihood the only ones in existence, over 2000 pieces of medical and surgical equipment and around 400 glass plate slides depicting anatomical images used in training.*

*The stored collections are in a dry, clean environment with conditions monitored regularly. Archival materials are used to house the collection and lighting levels are controlled. Displayed material is exhibited thematically and any potentially hazardous medical equipment is not accessible by visitors. All objects are in the process of being catalogued and entered onto an electronic database.*

*The collection is of historic significance because of its links to prominent health care professionals in Central Queensland and its documentary evidence of regional health care services throughout Australia. The extensive archives offer immense research potential into key industry groups as well as changes to the management and delivery of services in regional areas. The collection is also of social significance to the local nursing fraternity to utilise the uniform collection annually for International Nurses Day. The collection demonstrates provenance with clear ownership of the majority of objects documented. The collection also holds rare items and groups of items such as the Both Artificial Respirometer, of which only 800 were made by Lord Nuffield's Morris Car Company in Britain and distributed amongst the Commonwealth countries. The collection in its entirety is representative of regional health care especially country hospitals. The Collection is in excellent condition due to the professional administration of the volunteers and has immense interpretive potential for future projects by the group."*

Yvonne has commented that explaining the collection to a person outside our organization has assisted in developing her thinking about future management and documentation of the collection. We express our appreciation to both Yvonne and Bronwyn for their efforts in completing the assessment.

1. Russell, Roslyn, Winkworth, Kylie. 2010. 'Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections' accessed at <<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/glossary.html>> on 30 Nov 2011.

**From the Archives**

These two short stories from our Country Hospital Museum archives give us a glimpse of the way things were in 1949 – sixty-two years ago. Both stories were written in the 1980's as part of Yvonne Kelley's efforts to document early events in our hospitals.

The first story, "Back in 1949" was written by Mrs Viv Schneider, the Rockhampton Hospital's Domestic Supervisor, in August 1983. It provides an insight into conditions in the original Rockhampton Hospital buildings as they were in 1949. Viv writes:

*"All wards had wooden floors and the girls had to get down on their hands and knees and scrub the floors with sand soap, as there were no fancy detergents to use, the only solution used was Lysol or Dettol. The floors were washed every day with a mop and bucket of water and you had to wring the mop out by hand. Mop buckets didn't come in for over ten years or so after.*

*The ward girls all worked broken shifts as they had to come back at night and get tea and wash up for two wards, sometimes there would be 60 people to wash up for and all done by hand. Where A & E is now, Ward 1 men's ward, all accidents were also brought in there. Ward 2 was women's ward and used for the same purpose, both for accidents and other sick people.*

*The Nurses' Quarters were huts that the Americans used when they were in Rocky and then brought up to the Base to use as Nurses' Quarters. They also had wooden floors and had to be scrubbed with sand soap and then swept and washed every day.*

*The Outpatients' Department building was all wooden polished floors. They had to be polished with dark stain polish twice a week and every other day swept and then mopped over with an oily mop. You had to get down on your hands and knees and put the polish on. We had an old polisher but it was nearly always being fixed so that meant we had to do it on our hands and knees.*

*The kitchen was only half the size it is now and had coke stoves, which made it very hot. There was only one cold room to hold everything. In fact, it is still in the present kitchen and the dining room was an army hut as well and of course, it hasn't changed in 34 years.*

**Association Membership**

The Association welcomes your support for our activities. The Association operates on a normal financial year, so that subscriptions are now due for the 2011/2012 year.

If you wish to join the Association, please contact any member of the Management Committee listed on the back page of this newsletter, or email the Association at

[secretary@achha.org.au](mailto:secretary@achha.org.au) or post payments to ACHHA Inc, Box 4035, Rockhampton Qld 4700.

**Membership Fees**

Annual		
	Individual	\$20.00
	Couple	\$30.00
Life		
	Individual	\$200.00
	Couple	\$300.00

Please make cheques payable to: Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc.

**Newsletter**

If you have ideas for the newsletter, please contact me by phone or mail at the address above or by email to [secretary@achha.org.au](mailto:secretary@achha.org.au).

*The domestic uniforms were at first dark blue with fawn on the collar, the collars were then changed to white and now after 32 years, they have the new uniform they are now wearing (watermelon pink).*

*It would take too long to write and tell everything that went on in those days, but these are the main facts."*

*From: Viv Schneider  
Domestic Supervisor  
August 1983*

Readers of this Newsletter will recall that the previous Nurses' Quarters had been destroyed by fire on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1945 and were not replaced until 1954. Hence the reference to American army huts.

This postcard style photograph from our archives provides a view of the main entrance to the hospital in Canning Street in the 1940's with the buildings referred to by Viv Schneider.



The building on the right is the original hospital building commenced in 1867 while the building on the left is the Outpatients' Department and Sister Kenny Clinic built in 1938.

The brick fence was constructed between 1936 and 1939 with funds from the estate of Mr G. F. Sandrock, an early benefactor of the hospital. Portions of this fence still stand in Canning Street near the present post office and in front of the former superintendent's residence.

The heavy steel gates which are just visible are part of our collection and will be hung on the sandstone fence in front of the museum (currently under construction). We may wonder why the lady is sitting against the right hand gate post?

The second story, "Cyclone Drama" by Ms M Baker RN was also written in 1983 but covers a traumatic event which occurred during a tropical cyclone which struck Rockhampton on the evening of

2<sup>nd</sup> March 1949. The Morning Bulletin reported that the maximum wind gust of 100 mph (160 km/hr) was recorded at the airport at 6:50 pm.

Ms Baker writes:

*"If this Iron Lung could talk, this is one of the many interesting stories it could tell.*

*In the early part of 1949 there was a very ill teenage girl with Respiratory Distress Poliomyelitis being nursed in this Iron Lung at the Rockhampton General Hospital, now known as the Rockhampton Base Hospital.*

*On Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1949 the weather in Rockhampton deteriorated as a cyclone a little out to sea travelled past the city. There were no radar instruments or warning messages in those days. On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March the weather worsened as the cyclone crossed the coast at Gladstone then travelled overland to Rockhampton. By 6 pm there was a power failure and all Rockhampton including the General Hospital was blacked out.*

*The Iron Lung was operated by electricity but also had a manual pump. It was soon realized that if this girl was to be kept alive the Iron Lung would have to be operated by hand. This was quite difficult to do and could be maintained for short periods only. Therefore many persons would be needed as it was unknown when the cyclone would pass and when power could be restored.*

*The patient's father was well known in the city and he managed to get a large number of men to come to the hospital and man the pump, each one taking his turn and the going to the end of the line. They pumped the Iron Lung for 12 hours until power to the hospital was restored.*

*The nurses at the hospital kept the men supplied with tea and toast. How? The hospital had wood burning stoves in the kitchen and steam boilers for the water fuelled by coke. Kerosene Hurricane Lanterns were used for light.*

*The patient survived and was considered to be one of the very early victims of the 1949 Poliomyelitis epidemic in Queensland."*

**M Baker R.N. (1947 – 1951); 1983  
Written in 1983**

This photograph of the Iron Lung donated to the Hospital by the Nuffield Foundation in 1938 and now located in our Museum clearly shows the

manual T-piece pumping handle protruding above the compressor.



After the cyclone, critical questions were asked about the lack of emergency power in a hospital the size of the Rockhampton Hospital. One Letter to the Editor of the Morning Bulletin was very critical of the Board and was written in terms which would almost certainly not be published in the Letters to the Editor today.\*

In response to this letter published on 10 March 1949, the Morning Bulletin provided an explanatory statement from the Hospital's Manager, Mr Cecil Pritchard.\*

Basically, Mr Pritchard acknowledged that the Rockhampton Hospital's Board:

*"did not have an emergency electricity generating plant at the hospital during the cyclone. Formerly it had one, but this was transferred to the Westwood Sanatorium about three years ago, pending the Regional Board's power line being put through to Westwood. It was then expected that the line would be through in 12 months, but it still has to be built. When the emergency plant was transferred it was proposed to return the plant to Rockhampton as soon as the Regional Board's connexion with Westwood was made."*

\* 1949 'CORRESPONDENCE THE IRON LUNG.', Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954), 10 March, p. 3, viewed 26 Nov, 2011, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56896879>

Following on with information from our archives, we know that Cecil Pritchard was a long-serving Secretary of the Rockhampton Hospitals Board, having been appointed in January 1942. In 1981 his long service was recognised when a wing in the new Rockhampton Nursing Centre was named the "Cec Pritchard Wing and Administration Block.

This photograph depicts the opening of the wing by the Minister for Health, Hon. Brian Austin while the Chair of the Board, Mr Ted Loane looks on.



#### ***Biloela Hospital celebrates 80th Birthday***

In a notable event for our country hospitals, Biloela Hospital celebrated its 80th birthday on 10th July this year. Director of Nursing Joy Pitman and the staff celebrated in style by organising three functions—a luncheon, a bowls day and a dinner.

To assist in providing atmosphere, we were pleased to meet their request to borrow one of our uniform collections. By way of thanks, they donated us a copy of the cookbook which had been prepared as part of the celebrations, one of their very nice coffee mugs picturing the old and the new hospital, and a bag of lollies.

Staff-member Rhonda Nelson who collected and returned the uniforms said that the events had been very successful with 160 people attending the main dinner function on 8th October.

Rhonda also advised that one of the very successful innovations for the celebrations was the use of modern communication through a social networking Facebook page. You can view this page at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Biloela-Hospital-80th-Anniversary/202220356481406>

Alternatively, just type 'Biloela Hospital 80th anniversary' into your browser. You do not have to be a Facebook member to view the site.

It is interesting to see that as well as sharing information and photographs of the 2011 celebrations, the site has been used to identify people in earlier group photographs.

**Vale Lawrence Edwin Georgeson 27 July 1927 – 16 July 2011**

Dr Laurie Georgeson was a Life Member of our Association, actually the holder of Receipt No. 1. This tribute to Laurie who died on 16 September 2011 has been prepared by Dr Tom Dewar.

Laurie was born in Adelaide, then the family moved to Sydney. His father was a Liverpoolian and his Mother a Cockney.

He entered Sydney University in 1946 on a Bursary from St Aloysius College. In first year Medicine there were one thousand students, many of them returned servicemen. In 1953, Laurie graduated and married Joan, a Senior Hairdresser at Mark Foy's.

His Residency began at the Mater in Newcastle. The remuneration was £850 per year, with £2-12-6 deducted weekly whether you lived in or out. You had two days off every fortnight.

In 1956, Laurie and Joan moved to Townsville. The wage was £1,100 per year and £2 per week living out allowance. Dr N. Scott-Young was the Surgeon and Superintendent. A theatre list could go from 7 am to 11 pm. A term was spent on Palm Island, with weekly visits to Phantom Island Leprosarium.

In 1957, Laurie and Joan arrived in Rockhampton. Dr Mervyn Gold went into Private Practice and Dr Graham Cavaye replaced him at the Rockhampton Hospital. In 1959 Dr Tony Loscher flew Laurie to Emu Park in a Tiger Moth. Laurie obtained his

pilot's licence, and later was a Foundation Member of the Rockhampton Aero Club. In his spare time Laurie built and restored light aircraft. Three of his sons pursued an interest in aviation.

In 1988 Joan died from asthma and emphysema. In 1961 Rex Pilbeam asked Laurie to stand for the local Council. Laurie topped the poll and was on the Council for thirty-six years and Deputy Mayor for six years.

Regarding amalgamation, there is an antipathy between Urban and Rural Communities. The rural area is best served by a local Shire Council.

On arrival in Rockhampton Laurie set up the Red Cross Blood Bank. Dr Eric Shaw was amazed that Rockhampton had more cubicles for blood collection than Brisbane.

Laurie was a member of the Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association. In a private submission to Premier Beattie in consultation with Mr Robert Schwarten MLA he obtained a grant of \$160,000. This was to relocate the old Nurses' Quarters at the Mt Morgan Hospital to the Heritage Village for our Museum.

Laurie received a Distinguished Service Medal for his work at the Blood Bank and an OAM in 1999 for "Service to the Community, particularly through the Australian Red Cross".

A humble servant who served his family, community and church unselfishly.

**Dr Tom Dewar OAM**

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**Treasurer:** Kay Smith

**Archivist:** Yvonne Kelley

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