



## NEWSLETTER

JULY 2010

### *From the President*

Our plans to have the Hospital collection open to the public by June did not eventuate. However progress is being made in ensuring the collection and the building will be safe for the public to enjoy. It is now expected the building will be open to the public by the end of July.

Member's availability has allowed the building to be open on market days, and if anyone is working at any other times, the visitors to the Village who make their way down have been able to have a guided tour. This access has also been made to visitors to Rockhampton who have a particular interest in some aspect of the collection, and again special interest groups. My thanks to members who have made themselves available at a moments notice.

May was a busy month with school tours. Children from prep to high school were guided through the building - some 470 students in all, plus teachers and parents. So that the children can maximise their experience, guidelines and outcomes are being researched.

For the benefit of other visitors, a brochure has been developed to give a brief outline of each of the displays. This has been appreciated by those viewing without a member present to explain. Many positive compliments have been received verbally and in writing as to the experience offered by our museum.

As well as the work to finalise the displays, working bees have taken place to finalise the placement of the remainder of artefacts kept in the Council igloos, and our own container. Behind the scenes, members continue the cataloguing of files, and the sorting of the boxes of historical photos and papers. Volunteers to assist welcome.

The International Nurses Day celebrations with

welcome refreshments, the great debate and the dvd presentation was a great success. Of particular highlight was the appearance of Cyril (aka Kerry Reid-Searl) as one of the debate Judges, the uniforms of bygone times (the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1960s) worn by members, and a verbal message, the actual voice, from Florence Nightingale. This was a great team effort from the representatives of CQUniversity, Hillcrest and Mater Hospitals, Queensland Health, and the ACHHA.

Such was the success, that the International Nurses' Day committee has continued to meet, and is already planning for the 2011 International Nurses Day celebrations. The ACHHA is again represented by Yvonne and Norma in the positions of Secretary and Chairman respectively. Note the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011 in your diaries.

Elsewhere in the newsletter is the notice for the AGM, an important date in the ACHHA calendar. All positions will be declared vacant and nominations are sought. As ACHHA functions under best practice for Museums, there are position descriptions, guidelines and policies to assist members in their role on the Management committee. If not interested or able to consider a position on the management committee, there is also a need for volunteers to assist with the care and management of the displays as well as documentation. Can you help? The newly created Archivist position with Yvonne in the role is proving valuable to the organisation, in that more detailed work is being done within the museum, with the committee members being kept up to date with regular reports. The position of Archivist is not vacant.

The Management Committee now meets in the School of Arts building and this will be where the AGM meeting will be held. I look forward to seeing many members at this AGM.

**Norma West,**

### **Celebrating International Nurses' Day and the International Year of the Nurse**

Following a long-standing tradition, members of the Rockhampton nursing fraternity gathered on International Nurses' Day on May 12<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the contribution which the profession has made to the welfare of our communities over more than a century. The 2010 celebrations were particularly important since this year marks the International Year of the Nurse, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Florence Nightingale and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Matrons' Association.

The function was jointly sponsored by the Central Queensland Health Service District, the Mater Hospital, the Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc, Hillcrest Rockhampton Private Hospital and CQUniversity Australia. In recent times, International Nurses' Day has generally been celebrated with a church service. The format has been changed in an effort to attract more of the younger nurses.

The formal part of the celebration, chaired by Matthew Johnson, was held in the Amy Zelmer Building at the University and featured a PowerPoint presentation prepared by ACHHA Archivist, Yvonne Kelley. The presentation featured hospital buildings which have served Rockhampton since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and a display highlighting the way nurses' uniforms have changed over the same period. Nurses and former nurses wearing examples of these uniforms combined to read a Nurse's Poem written by Mary Carter. The material for these presentations was drawn from the ACHHA Country Hospital Museum Collection.

The second major feature of the evening's activities was a very entertaining debate on the topic "Thanks Flo – but we need to move on". A "Traditional Team" (Simon Mitchell, Denise Daley and Katie Curran) argued the case in favour of the approach and philosophies espoused by Florence Nightingale ("Flo") in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, while a "Contemporary Team" (Rhylly Webb, Mat Daley and Kylie Warby) argued the case for the current approach to nursing practice and education. The debate was chaired by Tony Gubbins and judged by "Cyril", Lorna Moxham and

Errol Payne. In the end, "Cyril" decided to leave it to audience acclamation to choose the winners (the "Traditional Team"). Cyril's performance was a highlight of the evening. "He" was played by Dr Kerry Reid-Searl in a full upper body latex suit which portrays an extremely convincing "grumpy old man". Kerry has received international commendation for this and other characters which she uses as teaching aids in her nurse training programs.

The formal program closed with a Vote of Thanks from ACHHA President, Norma West. As mentioned by Norma, the Organizing Committee has continued to meet to prepare for the 2011 function.

As usual, cameras were on hand and we are able to present a small set of the photos taken on the evening.

*Uniforms worn at the Rockhampton Hospital in the past were modeled by ACHHA members Del Leitgeb (L) (1918 nurse), Yvonne Kelley (1940's Sister) and Carol McIver (1929 nurse).*



*Sharing the celebrations were Debra Richards (ACHHA) (L), Tracey Wust, CEO of Hillcrest Hospital wearing a uniform representing that worn by Matron M Hood at the Rockhampton Hospital in 1888, Rhylly Webb, Director of Nursing at the Yeppoon Hospital and Sue Cadger of Hillcrest Hospital wearing the uniform made famous by Charles Dickens' character Sairey Gamp, a mid 19th Century midwife.*



Members of the debating teams were Simon Mitchell (L), Denise Daley, Rhylla Webb, Kylie Warby, Katie Curran and Matthew Daley.



ACHHA President Norma West (L) chats with fellow ACHHA members Nancy Crapp and Ashley Reid



Tracey Wust relaxing with Hillcrest Hospital colleague Robyn Abraham.



**Important notices**

**Annual General Meeting**

Notice is hereby given that the Association’s Annual General Meeting will be held on 13 September 2010 at 1:30 pm in the meeting room at the School of Arts Building in Bolsover Street (the Rockhampton Regional Library building).

**Forthcoming 2010 Rockhampton Heritage Village Events**

**Sunday 25 July 2010**

Emergency Services Day

**Sunday 12 September 2010**

Markets

**Sunday 28 November 2010**

Christmas Markets

Please take the opportunity to visit the Country Hospital 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. The Association operates on a normal financial year, so that subscriptions are now due for the 2010/2011 year..

If you wish to join the Association, please contact the secretary, Errol Payne, by phone on 4922 3314, by email at:

[secretary@achha.org.au](mailto:secretary@achha.org.au) or post payments to ACHHA Inc, Box 4035, Rockhampton Qld 4700. Of course any member of our management committee outlined on the final page will be pleased to assist you to join.

**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).

***From the Archives***

As indicated in the April Newsletter, we plan to publish a story from our collection in each edition of the newsletter. This issue includes an entertaining piece about the reality of working in the old hospital building during the night. It was written by a former member of the Rockhampton Hospital staff, L. M. Pearce and is entitled "*Nightshift Tales*".

The nightshift in the geriatric wards of the old hospital took some getting used to. One lone nurse spent most of her night sitting at the desk at the end of the ward under a single reading lamp. Her chores were quiet ones of making new dressings, catching up on paperwork, inventories and rolling bandages. She made half-hourly checks with her torch of the elderly patients. Company of another nurse arrived at two hourly intervals to assist with turning the people who were unable to do so themselves or to lay out a deceased patient. Sister in charge usually visited briefly once a night. The rest of the time, the nurse was on her own.

The wards themselves were of the Nightingale variety, a long row of beds down each side of a large room with a wide corridor down the middle. Beds were made of heavy iron with bed rings above each bed also made of the same suspended by weighty chains. There was very little privacy for the patient.

Many patients that were placed in this type of ward were put there because there was nowhere else for them to go. They were cared for the best way the nurses could. These people would only leave by passing on. Many of the patients passed on in the small hours of the morning. This added to the eerie atmosphere of the old buildings in the darkest shift. It was a belief of many nurses that unexplained night events were due to the previous occupants of the ward. Too many nurses heard and saw the same things to dismiss this belief lightly.

Footsteps in the night were a common occurrence. On hearing these, the nurse would walk from the ward to the adjacent lounge to locate the source of them and find no one there. Once she returned to the ward, the footsteps would start again but still no one was to be seen.

On a perfectly still night, sometimes the heavy bed ring of one or two beds would swing from side to side for no apparent reason. The nurse could see them moving though there was no breeze and the patient in the bed was motionless. It was difficult to explain this one away.

The pan room was another haunt of the night nurse. It was her responsibility to empty and make up the solution from powder and water for the surge machines. The surge machines were rectangular in shape and were big enough to hold four to five bedpans at one time. The hand-scrubbed bedpans were submerged in the solution. This process cleaned the pans for further use. It was a forgetful nurse that carried out this task between 1.00 a.m. and 2.00 a.m. The light bulb in the pan room always blew during this time even though several electrical inspections couldn't locate the problem.

The nurse would often go into the communal lounge for the elderly and find all the cushions off the chairs strewn all over the floor. If she replaced them she would find them on the floor again soon after so she usually left them till daylight to fix to their former neatness.

The night nurses became used to these unexplained occurrences as they were only of nuisance value. Their explanation was that with so many people ending their days in these walls there were bound to be a few reminders left behind.

These are stories from my training days in a general hospital. I have seen the bed rings move and heard the footsteps myself. The building has long been demolished.

***L.M.Pearce, Enrolled Nurse-July 2000***

This beautiful etching shows the Port Curtis and Leichhardt District Hospital, built in 1867 and demolished in 1986.



***Watching our website***

Almost a year has passed since I last reported on the performance of our website. Once again, our Web Designer, Dr Alison Payne, has generated a set of data to show what has been happening over the 12 months from 01 July 2009 to 30 June 2010.

Firstly, 2,352 individuals logged onto the site during this 12 months period compared to 1,075 in the 12 months from August 2008 until July 2009. With others looking over shoulders, that represents a significant number of people. Some visitors come back (there were 2,941 visits), and most looked at more than one page while they were at it (there were 11,466 page views). On average, there are 8 visits per day.

The most popular page views were "People" (1,735), "Stories" (493), "Resources" (479), the "Home Page" (469) and "Uniforms" (435).

As expected, most visits were from Australia (1,935). However there were 446 visits from the United States, 175 from the United Kingdom, 114 from Canada, 22 from Germany, 21 from the Philippines, 21 from India, 20 from New Zealand, 8 from Poland and 8 from Ireland.

Not surprisingly, the People page is the most popular, and of all the images on this page, the most popular is this one depicting Christmas in the Rockhampton Hospital in 1940. It has been viewed 247 times since 01 August 2008. This highlights the power of the web in giving access to at least a portion of our collection to people from all over the world. We are receiving a steady stream of enquiries by email, mainly relating to family history.

***The Salvation Army in Rockhampton***

Did you know that the Salvation Army has operated continuously on its Talford Street site for over 100 years. According to information in a summary provided in a Salvation Army submission to a Parliamentary Enquiry into Children in Institutional Care in 2003, the Glenties Rescue Home was opened in about 1902. This photograph of the home which catered for unmarried single girls and their babies was taken in about 1913.



In about 1924, it became the Glenties Mothers Hospital and in about 1938, a separate private maternity hospital called the Bethesda Mothers' Hospital was opened.

In her doctoral thesis, Dr Wendy Madsen, a CQU nursing academic who utilized some of the ACHHA's records in undertaking her research, reported that in 1916 Glenties had accommodation for 30 adults and 15 infants and provided work for four Salvation Army Officers and four employees. The Matron was Ensign Lily Gilbert. When it was opened, the Bethesda Mothers' Hospital offered ten private beds with each patient attended by their own private doctor. Wendy reports that in 1951, Bethesda was the only private hospital in Rockhampton where the licensee was a registered nurse. The maternity hospital closed by 1957.

In later years, the site has been occupied by institutions called the Bethesda Hospital and Hostel (ca. 1968), Bethesda Hostel (1970), Bethesda Hostel and Children's Home and Bethesda Children's Home (1976—1977) and then the Bethesda Family Day Care centre (1979—1986).

More recently, the focus has turned to care of the elderly with the site now occupied by the Bethesda Residential Care Centre.

**Sorting the Collection**

Some members of the Association may not be aware that even with the size of the new museum building, not all items of the collection are in the building. As mentioned by Norma, the Association also has a 40 ft shipping container which is located just inside the gates of the Heritage Village.

In addition to this, we are still sorting through a number of larger items which have been stored in one of the Igloos at Parkhurst. Older Rockhampton residents may recall that these were built for storage during World War 2 when there were huge contingents of American servicemen in the area. Some may also recall that one of these was converted to a dance hall for a time over fifty years ago.

This photograph shows Yvonne with Bill McIver and Del Leitgeb assessing this part of the collection in the huge igloo which also contains a vast collection of other memorabilia.



The scrub sink which was ‘rescued’ from the old hospital may be seen resting on tyres. This is now in place in the ward. Of course such heavy work necessitates a rest break. Carol McIver was taking the photographs.



**Another piece of history moves on**

The Rockhampton Hospital changes by the day. In late June as I was passing I noticed that the Doctors’ Flats were next in line to begin a new career. Here they are ready to be moved.



**Association contact details:**  
**Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc.**  
**PO Box 4035 Rockhampton Qld 4700**  
**[Incorporation Number: IA20217]**  
**Website: [www.achha.org.au](http://www.achha.org.au)**  
**Email: [enquiries@achha.org.au](mailto:enquiries@achha.org.au)**

**Patron: Dr Con Primmer OAM**

**Elected Office Bearers:**

**President:** Norma West  
**Secretary:** Errol Payne  
**Treasurer:** Kay Smith

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**Archivist:**  
 Yvonne Kelley

**Committee Members:**

Lorraine Antonello  
 Tom Dewar  
 Del Leitgeb  
 Carol McIver  
 Bill McIver  
 Jocelyn Philp  
 Ashley Reid  
 Debra Richards