

**President's Report**

Welcome to 2023.

I trust you had a joy-filled Festive season, a restful, well-earned break and are enjoying your 2023, so far.

The Association held two separate events on the afternoon of the 26th September 2022 which were well attended and enjoyed by all. The first was our Annual General Meeting which elects our committee for the following year and receives reports on the financial year just finished. The reports presented at the AGM are included with this newsletter. The second event was an afternoon tea at which the Association made a presentation to Errol in recognition of his contributions to our activities over many years. We were fortunate that Channel 7 local news reported on the latter event and on the 29th September there was a news report which positively promoted the museum. The report provided wonderful visual coverage and interviews with Kay and Errol told our story.

We went into holiday mode on 29th November, our last day of work for the Tuesday work group for 2022. We followed the work session with lunch at the Parkhurst Tavern where we were joined by other members of the ACHHA and their partners.

I think I can speak for the committee members and volunteers that we have all benefited from this break after the hard work over the past couple of years in completing the Standards Review.

The group was back in action on 31st January. We started our day with our normal cuppa and a special guest Sharnie who has been acting as the

supervisor of the Heritage Village and has certainly breathed new life into the village. Sharnie has been a wonderful support for ACHHA and we were sorry to see her go.

We went back into celebration mode the following Tuesday as we had the opportunity to wish our wonderful secretary Errol a very happy 80th birthday!

It is fair to say that our museum is still very much a work in progress. We will soldier on, set our goals and create an action plan to cover what we hope to achieve. Sometimes the work load is heavy to carry, and the amount of work to be done seems overwhelming. However, we will continue to work together to achieve what we can and would gladly welcome some younger people who would be prepared to lighten the load.

My thanks goes to each member of the management committee who give so willingly of their time and energy to ensure the museum stays relevant and vibrant.

Once again, my sincere thanks goes to the staff and Heritage Village volunteers. Among other things, they open and close the hospital each day so that we do not need to be there all the time when the visitors arrive because the museum is set up for self-guided tours. They also keep the garden looking good and the public areas of the building clean. The friendly and cheerful welcome we receive each week from the Heritage Village people is very much appreciated.

Del Leitgeb
President

Rockhampton Nurses in World War 2**Joan Sybilla Hooke and Ada Margaret Exton**

In writing this short account of Joan Sybilla Hooke's life, we are deeply indebted to her son, Dr Ian Tuohy, of Adelaide. Ian is researching his Mother's life and contacted us by email in 2020 seeking information about the hospital. After many emails the result was a sharing of information. Ian provided family information to which we would not have had access, plus photographs. We were able to provide information about the Rockhampton Hospital and nurse training programs while Joan was there.

Joan Sybilla Hooke was born in Rockhampton on 16 Oct 1914 and died in Adelaide on 02 Jul 1991. Joan undertook her nursing studies at Rockhampton Hospital, commencing on 09 Jan 1933. Her certificate was issued on 08 Mar 1937. Joan completed her 6-month midwifery qualification at the Brisbane Women's Hospital, commencing about October 1938 with her certificate issued on 13 Apr 1939. Joan decided to join the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) to serve as a nurse during World War 2.

Staff Nurse Joan Hooke commenced her service at the Redbank depot in Brisbane 04 May 1940.

These photographs provided by Dr Ian Tuohy show Joan wearing two different versions of the AANS World War 2 uniform.



After taking pre-embarkation leave from 29 Sep 1940 to 08 Oct 1940, Joan and nine colleagues left the South Brisbane Interstate Train Station on 11 Oct 1940 to join the Army's Eastern Command en route to Greece. Another Rockhampton-trained nurse in the group of nine was Ada Margaret (Peg) Exton who had trained at the Hillcrest Private Hospital.

The group embarked for the trip to the Middle East on the "Aquitania", a luxury Cunard liner which had been pressed into service as a troop ship during the World War 2. They disembarked in the Middle East and were assigned to the 2/5th Australian General Hospital (AGH), which was assigned to service in Greece, on 24 Nov 1940. Embarkation to travel from the Middle East base to Greece occurred on 10 Apr 1941.

However, this turned out to be a short deployment because it became obvious that the allied armies would be unable to hold Greece against the German advance. A massive withdrawal exercise by ship was commenced later in April.

During the withdrawal, Joan came under bombing in a graveyard/cemetery in Greece before she and other nurses boarded a ship to be evacuated from a beach outside Athens to be taken to Crete, a large island off the Greek coast which was outside the immediate war zone.

Joan's son, Dr Ian Tuohy, has shared Joan's diary entry for ANZAC Day 1941 with us.

It reads “Out of trucks and lying in thistles for about an hour – time bombs going off. Little boats busy loading”. Joan was on the last boatload to embark “Thurland Castle” as it was pulling out at 3:20 am – “crawled up a ladder in the dark. Dive bombed a few hours later by German planes – just missed us by 10 yards! Our cabin window and some others were broken and some chaps on deck injured by shrapnel! Raids all day until about 3 pm – our boat only troop ship so all planes concentrating on us – but they didn’t get us.”

Another Australian nurse, Sister Sylvia Duke, wrote that “Abandoned trucks on every side - the awful sense of complete desolation everywhere”.

This extract from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs website puts this evacuation into a much broader context.

“Even as the Australians and New Zealanders began digging in at Thermopylae, the decision was made to evacuate Greece. Greek confidence was waning and it seemed that nothing could stop a full German occupation of the country. On 24 April 1941 the Greek government left Athens for Crete and preparations were well under way to remove Lustre Force from the Greek mainland.

Between the nights of 24 and 29 April, ships of the British Mediterranean Fleet arrived at various locations east and west of Athens, and at three beaches in the Peloponnese. From there troopships and warships - among them HMAS Perth, Stuart, Vendetta, Voyager and Waterhen - embarked over 50,000 soldiers. They were taken, often under enemy air attack, to Crete or Egypt. During the evacuation rear-guard actions fought by Australian, British and New Zealand forces delayed the enemy at Brallos Pass, Thermopylae, Erithrai, Corinth and at other places. On 27 and 28 April, German troops entered Athens and by the end of the month the whole of mainland Greece was in their hands.”

An article on the Australian War Memorial website comments on the dangers posed by the dive bombers. “The greatest danger facing the warships was attack by dive bombers. On 30 May, eleven men died when a bomb hit HMAS Perth as it was evacuating over 1 000 soldiers from Sfakia.”

Returning to Joan’s story. It is not clear exactly where she worked in the following months but it is likely to have been in one of the Australian General Hospitals behind the front lines of the war and possibly on Crete. When Japan entered the

war in December 1941, it was necessary to relocate many troops and nurses to Australia to assist with the local war effort. Joan embarked from the Middle East on the “Mauretania”, another Cunard Line ship pressed into war service, on 31 Jan 1942. They were transhipped to the “City of Paris” at Bombay and arrived back in Australia on 24 Mar 1942. Apparently she held postings at Ipswich and Goondiwindi over the next few months and was promoted to Group I Sister on 01 Dec 1942. She embarked on the “Manunda” in Brisbane to be taken to Port Moresby on 03 Mar 1943 where hospitals were established to care for casualties in the war with Japan.

Joan was promoted to Lieutenant on 23 Mar 1943 and to Captain on 16 Aug 1943. Records suggest that she again joined the 2/5th AGH, this time in New Guinea and was there until 19 Jan 1944 when she embarked on the SS Canberra and was transferred to Townsville where she disembarked on 22 Jan 1944.

Like others, including Alma Crudgington, Joan met her future husband while serving in Port Moresby. He was Flight Lieutenant Keith Tuohy. Over the next couple of months in Australia, Joan was attached to different military Hospitals including 112 AGH and 2/5 AGH. She was appointed Captain to No. 112 Military Brisbane Military Hospital on 09 May 1944 and married Keith Tuohy in Sydney on 19 May 1944.

Joan remained in the service until her retirement on 03 Jul 1944. Her appointment was terminated on 19 Jul 1944 and she was transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 20 Jul 1944.

Ada Margaret (Peg) Exton was born on 14 Dec 1915 in Brisbane. We know that she trained at Hillcrest Hospital, probably a year or two behind Joan Hooke who was training at the Rockhampton Hospital. There is probably a simple reason for her to choose Hillcrest as her training hospital. She was a niece of Dr Harriette Martha Voss (née Exton), wife of Dr Paul Voss. As members know, Hillcrest hospital was established by Dr Francis Henry Vivien Voss in about 1900 and was in the possession of the Voss family until 1951. In the 1937 electoral rolls, Ada Margaret gave her address as Penmaen, the very imposing Voss family home in Bolsover St which was later called the Voss Clinic.

From Goodman (p. 179), we have information that Peg undertook her midwifery studies at the Brisbane Women’s Hospital. She may have worked at the Wilga Private Hospital (Toowoomba) before World War 2. She enlisted for service in the AANS in Brisbane 26 Jul 1940. We know from the story about Joan Hooke that Peg and Joan were both members of a group of nine Queensland

nurses who left South Brisbane Interstate Train Station on 11 Oct 1940 to join the Army's Eastern Command in preparation for travelling to Greece.

Ada Margaret's full record has not yet been uploaded to the web so we rely on research previously undertaken by Rupert Goodman for his book about Queensland nurses. The record appears to be similar to the one above for Joan Hooke. She served with the 2/5th AGH in the Middle East, Greece and Crete as well as in Australia and the South West Pacific area which would have included New Guinea. Her date of discharge was 13 Mar 1946 with the rank of Captain. Goodman states that she then worked for the Repatriation Department from 1946 to 1976. She was living in Brisbane during this period.

Rupert Goodman *"Queensland Nurses—Boer War to Vietnam"* Boolarong Publications 1985

Vale Rhylla Webb

Management Committee Member Christine Putman is continuing with her program of conducting oral history interviews with notable local nurses. Chris set out in mid-2022 to interview Rhylla Webb. These interviews usually take place over a number of sessions. Unfortunately Rhylla's health deteriorated very quickly and only the first interview took place. Chris has typed this up and I have done some editing into the newsletter format and added two photographs from our collection.

Rhylla Webb grew up in Home Hill in North Queensland. She was the 4th of 5 girls in the family. Rhylla had an ambition to go nursing which her father opposed because he thought that she should aim higher in her career choice. Her mother had died when she was 10 and her father's sister became an ally who helped to persuade her father to allow her to take up the profession. However, he imposed a condition that she complete her course at an Anglican hospital rather than the Townsville General. The only choices at that time were St Martin's in Brisbane and St John's (formerly Tannachy) in Rockhampton.

The family's parish priest in Home Hill wrote to the Anglican Bishop of Rockhampton, Bishop Theodore Mc Call, with whom he had been to theological college, asking him to put in a good word for Rhylla at St John's.

Rhylla and her stepmother went by train to Rockhampton for the interview and it was arranged that Rhylla would start nursing September 1962. They were given a pattern for the

uniform which they had to have made. Rhylla duly made her way again by train to start her training.

The Nurses Quarters were very old and dilapidated and were replaced the following year. Matron Pitt was Matron. She epitomised a "Matron" i.e. big busted, not fierce, but fair.

At that time, you could start nursing having completed only year 8. Lectures were given by Doctors and a Tutor Sister taught the "nursing" subjects. All lectures were in nurses' own time. State Examinations were held each year for the first 3 years and the 4th year was an experience year. The Butterfly veil was worn in fourth year after all formal examinations had been completed. Rhylla topped the state in the exams.

Returning to the beginning of Rhylla's career, there was a week of orientation when she started with 2 other nurses and then straight to work. Rhylla found the first month terrifying. However, the other nurses helped each other and provided support.

To provide context for Rhylla's training venue, the original hospital building had been a very large, expensive house called Tannachy, built originally in the 1880s for William Pattison, one of the original shareholders of the Mount Morgan Gold Mine. The house was converted to Tannachy Hospital in 1922 when it was purchased by Dr Norman Talbot, later joined by Dr Frank Wooster in 1924. The building had a central hallway with single and double bedroom off each side. Two enclosed verandahs had 5 male and 5 female beds. In the centre of the building was a nurse's station. The old ballroom was partitioned into administration, Day Room, Outpatients, Emergency, Theatre, Matron's office and a room for specialising patients. Off the ball room was the dining room and the other side was the kitchen. Down the ramp was children's ward which had 8 beds. The other side was Talbot Ward with 8 private rooms. There was a cottage at the back which was the old servants' quarters. There was also a maternity ward called Wooster Ward which had 10 rooms and a delivery suite.

There were 20 staff at St John's when Rhylla started. Student nurses had to live in. Nurses had to be home by 9.30 pm and they could get a late pass once a week and a ball pass once a month until 12.30 am. There were 5 weeks holiday per year. Wages were £6 a week including board. Stockings cost £1.19.11.

Rhylla graduated ca. 1966 after her four years of training. Our collection includes several photographs of Rhylla taken on graduation day including this one with her two fellow graduates. Rhylla is on the right.



Rhylla completed midwifery training at the Lady Goodwin Hospital. She worked in midwifery at St John's from 1967 – 1972. After her first child was born, she worked 3 days per week at the hospital.

Rhylla's husband, a teacher, was transferred to Blackwater between 1977 and 1983. While at Blackwater, Rhylla was the Director of the Family Centre which included child care, a nursery with 20 cots, a kindergarten, preschool, and a child welfare clinic. There was a social worker available and the Centre provided parenting courses. When she returned from Blackwater in 1983, Rhylla again worked at St John's for three days per week, this time in recovery.

In 1984, Rhylla became a Nurse Educator at the Rockhampton Base Hospital where she worked with Meg Wilson. She then worked as a full-time Midwifery Educator from 1985-1997 at which time midwifery education moved into the University. During this period, she taught difficult subjects such as Indigenous health subjects and endocrinology. She became a State examiner for the General Nursing Council and was appointed to the Queensland Nursing Council where she was the Senior Midwifery Examiner. She was a moderator for the standard expected for the exams. Rhylla was also involved in the Registered Nurse re-entry program.

Our collection includes a photograph of Rhylla with graduating midwifery students on 07 Sep 1992.

Three separate groups of students trained in midwifery at the Rockhampton Hospital during 1991 and 1992. This photograph includes nine students from the total group of sixteen.

Nurse Educator Rhylla Webb with a group of 9 students who graduated in midwifery on 07 Sep 1992.



Front Row (L to R): Margaret Thomas, Desley Boorman, Rhylla Webb, Kaye Whitfield, Kathryn Steffensen, Cherylee Gordon. Second Row: Bernadette Carbery, Erin Russel, Judith Pridham, Geraldine Prendergast.

In 1995, Rhylla helped organise a local symposium re moving Midwifery training to the university. She wrote the curriculum and set up the competency tools needed with Barbara Ritchie, Head of Nursing at the University. As a result, the final Rockhampton Base Hospital intake of midwifery students was in mid-1993.

In 1999, she was appointed Director of Nursing at Woorabinda Hospital where she was involved in putting organisational structures in place and training staff. She left Woorabinda in 2002.

This was followed by a 3-month job as District Manager of Gladstone Hospital during which she reviewed nursing structures. She then had a 6-month appointment in Emerald where she appointed a new Director of Nursing at the Blackwater Hospital and opened the Springsure Hospital. At Emerald she worked to improve the workplace culture and finally appointed a new Director of Nursing. She was then asked by Queensland Health's District Manager, Sandra Thompson, to be Director of Nursing at the new Yeppoon Hospital.

Rhylla was also a trained Queensland Health investigator, undertaking investigations at Julia Creek, Aramac and the Central Sterile Services Department in Rockhampton. The aim of the investigations was to make recommendations for change.

Rhylla continued studying while she worked. She completed her Nursing degree in 1995 through Deakin University. In 1997, she completed a Diploma in Financial Management and then a Graduate Diploma in Management in 2000.

Rhylla retired in 2015 and died in 2022.

Rockhampton Base Hospital First Nurse Re-Entry Group 1990

Rockhampton Hospital introduced a re-entry program for trained nurses who had not practised for a number of years. The aim of the program was to update and refresh nurses’ knowledge after the gap in their careers. Students who were working in groups often chose a name for their group to help identify themselves. The first group of re-entry students chose to call themselves the “**Retreads**”. This photograph of group members is part of the Country Hospital Museum photograph collection.



*Rockhampton Hospital students in the first Nurse Re-entry group in 1990. **Back Row:** Rae Moore, Margaret Wood, Judy McKane, Elizabeth Whitcombe, Joan Groenhuijzen, Lola Klauke. **Middle Row:** Dianne Williams, Enid Bailey, Jennifer Macauley, Margaret Sheridan, Rhonda Bristow, Cynthia McInnes. **Front Row:** Donna Porter, Beryl Neilson, Lorraine Birse, Denise Cagney. (© Mal Whyte Photographics AIPP 1990)*

Association Membership
 The Association welcomes your support for our activities. If you wish to join our Association, application forms are available from Committee members, 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 membership is \$20.00 for an individual and \$30.00 for a family. Life membership is \$200.00 for an individual and \$300.00 for a family.

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

Elected Office Bearers
President: Del Leitgeb
Vice-President: Dorothy Broad
Secretary: Errol Payne
Treasurer: Kay Smith

Archivist: Yvonne Kelley

Committee Members
 Nancy Crapp
 Janet Iffinger
 Matthew Johnson
 Del Kajewski
 Carol McIver
 Daphne Murdoch
 Christine Putman