

**President's Report**

How time flies when you're having fun!

It is hard to believe that we are in the second half of 2023.

This year has been less demanding, and we have taken a more relaxed attitude to the various projects we have launched into.

Our regular working party continues to meet on Tuesday morning. I would like to thank everyone involved as they continue to tackle the vital behind the scenes work, such as cataloguing the rooms and keeping our static displays updated and tidy.

Apart from this regular work by the Tuesday Group members, the process of recording of oral histories is continuing in the background. Chris Putman is the volunteer doing most of this work, but Dr Joe Putman has once again stepped in to assist by recording Dr John Provan's story just under a month before his death. This issue of the Newsletter demonstrates the value of oral histories because it forms the basis of the tribute to the late Dr Provan which is published in the newsletter

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of our dedicated committee members. Errol our Secretary, who continues to keep us motivated and focused and is always available to advise and guide us. Along with Kay our Treasurer, who keeps our finances in check.

The highlights for the ACHHA Committee this year have been attending the Mt Chalmers Anzac Day Ceremony in April and The International Nurses Day dinner in May.

We accepted an invitation from Mt Chalmers Historical Society to deliver their 2023 Anzac Day Address recognising the role nurses played in World War's 1 and 2 and other major conflicts.

We were warmly welcomed by the committee and community, and the ACHHA members who attended enjoyed good country hospitality.

The reward for our involvement has seen some of their members visiting the museum and making a very generous donation of \$300.00.

The International Nurses Day Dinner in May was well represented by ACHHA Members. We all enjoyed dinner at CocoBrew and a catch up with some old colleagues.

Errol has included photo from both events later in the Newsletter.

Planning for the AGM on September 25th is underway. An invitation is extended to all members who wish to attend at Schotia Place in Bolsover St.

We will continue to try to attract some younger members. However this is not an easy task as everyone has such busy lives.

On a positive note, we have received many compliments in the visitors' book, by a wide range of people, some from overseas, expressing praise for our Country Hospital Museum.

Thanks again to the village staff and volunteers, always a friendly welcome as we continue to work together.

Del Leitgeb
President

A special Anzac Day for our Association

For Anzac Day 2023, the Mt Chalmers Community History Centre Inc. invited our Association to provide a guest speaker to commemorate the role of nurses in wartime. Our President, Del Leitgeb, agreed to take on the role of addressing those who attended. The Mount Chalmers group has developed a tradition of marking Anzac Day at a memorial in a park near the old school. Including Del, eight members of our Association attended the very well organised function and enjoyed the country hospitality of the Mount Chalmers residents.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Mount Chalmers was a thriving mining community, commenced when gold was discovered ca. 1860. However, when the mine collapsed around 1915, many people moved away, and those who remained generally engaged in a farming career. As a matter of interest, a hospital was constructed at Mount Chalmers shortly before mining collapsed but was not used. When the population dwindled, the decision was taken in 1917 to move the building to Yeppoon where it became a convalescent home on the waterfront at the southern end of the town. It later became the Yeppoon Hospital.



Yeppoon Convalescent Home at Yeppoon after being purchased from Mount Chalmers.

The school was one of the Mt Chalmers buildings which survived and was eventually given over to the Mt Chalmers Community History Centre for use as a museum to tell the story of the town.

Del’s presentation on the role of nurses was excellent and was very well received by those present. As one mark of this success, the member for Capricornia, Hon Michelle Landry MP, sought permission to reproduce the

speech almost in full in the local newspaper *CQ Today*. This photo shows Del delivering her 2023 Anzac Day Address at Mount Chalmers.



The name of the father of one of our Management Committee Members, Nancy Crapp, is on the World War 2 roll of honour at Mount Chalmers. Nancy (Right) and our Vice President, Dot Broad, placed a wreath at the memorial on behalf of our Association.



The third picture includes special guests who attended the ceremony. They were (L to R): Cr Clint Schofield (Livingstone Shire Council (LSC)), Mr Graham Ivers (Salvation Army, Bugler), Cr Andrea Friend (LSC), Mayor Andy Ireland (LSC), Mr Laurie Atlas (representing Hon. Michelle Landry MP),

Mr William Beanland (Piper) and Cr Adam Belot (LSC) with Del Leitgeb in the front row.



In an unexpected but delightful follow up to Anzac Day, four members of the Mt Chalmers History Centre visited our Museum on 24th June and presented a donation of \$300 to express their appreciation to Del and thank those who joined her at Mt Chalmers on the day.



At our Museum on 24 Jun 2023 are (L-R) President, Mt Chalmers History Centre, Mt Chalmers representative, Daphne Murdoch, Diann Brooks, Janet Iffinger, Mt Chalmers representative, Nancy Crapp, Del Leitgeb, Del Kajewski, Errol Payne. Inset are the photographers, Sue Hutchinson, Secretary, Mt Chalmers History Centre, Berenice Payne (ACHHA member).

The two groups then joined for lunch at the Parkhurst Tavern.

Tribute to Dr John Gilmour Provan

We regret to advise the passing of another of our Life Members, Dr John Gilmour Provan, on 16 June 2023. We are very pleased that Dr Joe Putman interviewed Dr Provan just under a month before his death. This tribute is almost entirely based on that interview.

John Provan was born in Ayr, Scotland, on 01 Feb 1931. He performed very well in his school examinations and in 1948 was able gain admission to the Medical School at the University of Glasgow where he completed the course without difficulty. He undertook his resident year at the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow, during which time he met his future wife, Mary, who was undertaking her final year of nurse training at the hospital.

On completion of his residency, John, in common with all Scottish men at the time, commenced a compulsory two year period of military service. This service was undertaken as a doctor in the Royal Air Force. During his residency period, he had spent six months in medicine and six months in orthopaedic surgery. Orthopaedic surgery was a specialty that not many doctors chose and, since there were no such specialists in the Air Force, he spent most of his time in the service working in this field.

John and Mary were married on 27th March 1958. John next worked in the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow as a surgical registrar. By that time he had completed his Fellowship in Surgery.

John and Mary decided they would like to go overseas and began looking for suitable positions. These were very limited, but he decided to take a position as the Surgeon in Basutoland in Africa. This was quite a brave move for a relatively young couple with three small children, the youngest about six months, because then, as now, there was quite a lot of unrest in the country.

John was the only surgeon in the country, and there had been none previously. There were no trained anaesthetists – the hospital porters who brought the patients into the theatre administered the anaesthetic by holding cloths soaked in ether or chloroform over the patient's nose and mouth. John managed to organise for a trained anaesthetist to come from Bloemfontein for two days per week.

Since there had been no surgeons in the country to undertake caesarean operations, many women suffered from vesicovaginal fistula. John carried

out many repair operations and after that, women were encouraged to be close to a hospital when they were about to give birth. John also treated quite a number of gunshot wounds due to the violence. In the main town of Basutoland there was an English pharmacist who, with his son, ran the chemist shop. Some of his staff complained to their union that they were not being paid enough. The union officials told them that they would not get any more money out of that man. The only thing they could do was to shoot him and they would get another pharmacist. They did this around lunch time one Saturday and John was unable to save him. The result was there were no pharmacies in Basutoland.

The same group that killed the pharmacist next targeted the matron-in-charge of all the hospitals in the country seeking more pay. Her response was to go to the police station and learn to use a gun. The police were mainly from England or South Africa. From then on, she went everywhere carrying two large revolvers and she survived. Not many of the locals could afford guns.

There was a notable highlight during John's time in Basutoland. There was a child in the hospital with a large mass in the left side of his abdomen which was causing a bowel obstruction. John operated to remove the mass and the child recovered and did very well after that. This led to the locals regarding him as some sort of a God and called him "Daddy Morena". In the absence of pathology services, John had no way of knowing exactly what he was dealing with.

Later in the stay, John, Mary and the three children went for a drive and encountered a large hostile group of locals holding a demonstration, presumably against the English. They surrounded the car and were quite belligerent until one of them looked in the window and called out "It's Daddy Morena". They then came up in small numbers, doffed their caps etc and escorted the family all the way home.

John had originally signed up for two years and by that time there was a local doctor who had qualified as a surgeon and was keen to come home. There were also problems getting a decent education for the children as they grew up, so they returned to Scotland. There he mostly found short term work as a locum plus a couple of other jobs that lasted for several months. Then he saw an advertisement for a position in Sydney and decided to apply and was successful in gaining a position as

Senior Surgical Registrar at Sydney Hospital where he spent two years. In the first year, one of his jobs was to manage the examination of doctors attempting to gain their Fellowships in Surgery. In the second year, he decided that this had been a lot of effort so he decided to sit the examinations himself! He passed, of course, and his qualifications in the Rockhampton Hospital Annual Reports show that he was a Fellow of both the Royal College of Surgeons (Glasgow) and the Royal Australian College of Surgeons!

John's next move in 1968 was to apply for a position at Port Headland. He was successful. However, the senior doctor in Perth told him that Port Headland had limited educational facilities and he had instead created a position for him in Carnarvon which he accepted. They were there for about four years before it became necessary to consider the older child's need for secondary education. While John did not mention this in his oral history interview, an article in The Morning Bulletin to mark his retirement said that he had been the Medical Officer-in-Charge of the Royal Flying Doctor Service from 1968 - 1972.

In 1972, the position of Medical Superintendent at the Rockhampton Hospital became available. John applied and was appointed, commencing duty on 01 Nov 1972. In the interview, he noted that conditions in the old timber hospital were fairly primitive. In particular, there were no screens on the windows which meant that flies had easy access to wounds. John said that he spent a lot of his time on designing a new hospital. The plans were accepted and funding became available to construct the new medical services building which opened in 1986. He also designed the first buildings in the North Rockhampton Nursing Centre and worked on the renewal of the Yeppoon Hospital located in Anzac Parade on the seafront. He was proud of this compared to the third version of the hospital located west of Yeppoon.

With all of the time which he spent on planning, supervision of the medical staff and the constant recruitment of new staff mainly from overseas and from the UK in particular, John said that he had little time to undertake actual surgery. He hired Dr Ivan Guandalini to cover these duties.

There were regular meetings a couple of times per year between the Queensland Medical Superintendents and the Minister for Health. These were very successful while Sir Llewellyn Edwards was

the Minister between 1974 and 1978. Planning was very productive and cooperative. Sadly, the Premier of the day found it necessary to transfer Dr Edwards to the position of Treasurer and place the former Treasurer in the Health portfolio. Apparently the new Health Minister was a heavy drinker and resented his demotion from Treasury to Health and was intent on destroying what had been put in place previously.

In the early 1980s, John developed heart problems and had bypass surgery which was fairly, but not totally, successful and John still suffered from angina. His doctors recommended that he retire which he did on 30 Jun 1986, aged 55. This was just when the new medical Services Block was opened, so John didn't have the opportunity to use the new facilities.

He and Mary moved to a block of land at Farnborough. Not surprisingly, he said that he was bored after a couple of months and commenced working as a locum for several Yeppoon based doctors. He then moved back into his field of surgery, assisting Dr Graham Wetzig and Dr Andrew Russell and one or two other surgeons with operations such as gastric banding and gastric sleeves. The work kept him busy for two or three days per week.

He finally retired again aged 85.

Dr Putman asked if they had ever considered going back to Scotland to live. He said that they liked to visit and had kept their houses there, but never seriously considered going back. He said that he didn't think that he and Mary would have made 92 and 91 if they had been living in Scotland.

RIP Dr John Provan and sincere condolences to his wife of 65 years, Mary, and all members of his family.

Thinking about John's contribution to Rockhampton Hospital between 1972 and 1986 provides an opportunity to contemplate the role which the hospital played in setting up over 40 years of stable, high quality, medical service to Central Queensland. One of the resources in our Museum is a set of photos of medical staff taken annually during the periods when the Medical Superintendents were Dr T. A. Sale (1960—1972) and Dr J. G. Provan (1972—1986). These were hung in the Doctors' Common Room and we have almost a complete set. One of these, the 1980 photograph is reproduced on the following page as an example from Dr Provan's time as Medical Superintendent.

Anzac Day address to Mt Chalmers Anzac Day Commemoration by Del Leitgeb

You save 1 life you're a Hero

You save 100 lives you're a Nurse

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Anzac Day and to acknowledge and honour the role nurses played in World Wars 1 and 2 and other major conflicts.

“NURSING IS A PROFESSION OF SELFLESSNESS. YOU GIVE NOT TO RECEIVE

BUT SIMPLY TO SERVE THOSE IN NEED.”

When one thinks of nursing in times of war, most people conjure the image of Florence Nightingale, the Lady with the Lamp, who essentially pioneered war time nursing in the Crimea with strict adherence to hygiene as a method of wound treatment and illness prevention. Nightingale died in 1910 aged 90, four years before the outbreak of the First World War. If she had lived, she would have been proud to witness the developments, where nursing had progressed from a voluntary and somewhat sporadic activity to a well-organised vocation on a major scale matching that of the soldiers themselves. Nurses had become part of the military, serving as key contributors in a designated medical corps.

Australian Nurses have been going to war for more than 100 years, often serving far from home, taking care of the sick and wounded on land, sea and in the air.

More than 2000 Australian women served overseas in the Australian Army Nursing Service during World War 1. These courageous and dedicated Australian women worked in difficult and often terrifying conditions, with poor facilities that lacked medical supplies, water and sanitisation. They cared for patients in military clinics and makeshift field hospital near battlefields, and on cramped evacuation ships and trains. Yet they earned a reputation for being resilient and hardworking whilst they treated large numbers of wounded and traumatised soldiers with care and compassion.

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This image depicts the full-time medical staff at the Rockhampton Base Hospital in October 1980. Back Row (L - R): Dr S. Lawton, Dr R. Brady, Dr J. Allan, Dr C. McLeay, Dr O. Webster (Intern), Dr T. Conaghan (Resident Medical Officer), Dr P. Brown, Dr M. Sykes; Third Row: Dr D. Whittle, Dr J. Lapere, Dr D. Nicol, Dr M. Naidoo, Dr L. Harvey, Dr P. Thompson, Dr J. O'Donohue; Second Row: Dr L. Paul, Dr K. Ferguson, Dr S. Harbison, Dr M. Culpan, Dr C. Whittington, Dr W. Christie (Clinical Assistant), Dr R. Wilmott; Front Row: Dr J. Thomson (Surgeon), Dr A. M. McDonald (Director of Anaesthetics), Mr I. Guandalini (Director of Surgery), Mr J. Provan (Medical Superintendent), Dr A. Ewart (Director of Medicine), Mr M. Chowdhury, Dr H. Hunt.

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Australian Lieutenant Harold Williams recalled his admiration for nurses whilst wounded at Peronne in 1918:

“In large marquee, nurses, pale and weary beyond words, hurried about. That these women worked their long hours among such surroundings without collapsing spoke volumes for their will power and sense of duty. The place reeked with the odour of blood, antiseptic dressings and unwashed bodies. The nurses saw soldiers in their most pitiful state, wounded, blood stained, dirty.”

By the end of WW1, the Australian Army Nursing Service had developed many new skills, practices and responsibilities, proving that they were essential to military medical service.

When the 2nd World War broke out in 1939, Nurses again volunteered, motivated by a sense of duty

and desire to “do their bit.”

Initially, the Australian Army Nursing Service was the sole service that women could join. As the war escalated, and the involvement of navy and air force grew, more nurses were needed. This led to the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service in 1940 and The Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service in 1942.

Up to 5000 Australian nurses served in a variety of locations, including the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Britain, Asia, the Pacific and Australia.

The war in the Pacific presented many additional challenges to nurses. Working in hot and humid tropical areas, with incessant rain, insects and vermin thwarted efforts to control disease and infections. Health staff and soldiers were all at risk of tropical diseases such as Malaria, Dengue

Fever and Scrub Typhus. The filthy overcrowded conditions along with poor sanitation and unsanitary water resulted in Dysentery, Cholera and Hepatitis.

During WW II Australian Army, Navy and Air Force nurses sacrificed their health and wellbeing. But unfortunately, seventy-eight nurses lost their lives, some through accident or illness, but most as a result of enemy action or while prisoners of war. Again, the Australian nurses earned the reputation of being courageous, dedicated and professional.

For 30 years after WW II, Australian Army Nurses continued to serve overseas in countries such as Korea, Malaya, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The Vietnam War saw more than 200 civilian nurses, as well as nurses from the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Australian Army serve their country.

The nurses were in their twenties, all relatively new to their profession, with no experience of dealing with gunshot wounds, patients with limbs torn off in explosions or third world diseases. The pressure of their jobs was exacerbated by heavy workloads, appalling conditions and limited medical supplies.

However, upon their return to Australia, few of the nurses ever spoke of their time in Vietnam. Many were suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and they were silenced by an anti-war sentiment plus government refusal to acknowledge their military service.

ANZAC Day is one of the most important days for all Australians, a day to remember and honour our servicemen and women who have helped to protect our country. It is also a day to acknowledge the sacrifices of the nurses in the military, the incredible women who were willing to risk their lives to save others. We thank them for their service and continue to remember them.

The Australian Country Hospital Museum at the Rockhampton Heritage Village has an Honour Board on display which acknowledges the service of 25 local women, who trained at the Rockhampton Hospital and served in WWI. Additionally, some of the Museum displays show the equipment and medical supplies used by our nurses during war times and the many photographs reflect the vital role that nurses have played throughout the years in caring for us all.

Lest we forget.

International Nurses Day 2023

The annual International Nurses Day event, organised by the Rockhampton International Day Committee, was a successful activity once again in 2023. Quite a large group of nurses gathered at CocoBrew for a dinner on 12 May.

ACHHA has always been a strong supporter of this event and once again had a good turnout, as seen in the photograph on the next page. Our President, Del Leitgeb, had the privilege of cutting the cake, watched by IND Committee President, Matthew Johnson, who is also an ACHHA member. It's a shame that we can't afford to print the Newsletter in colour, because this is a very colourful group. The web version is in colour, of course.



International Nurses Day has a 50+ year history both internationally and in Rockhampton. In 1965, the International Council of Nurses introduced an "International Nurse Day". Despite efforts by its leaders, President Eisenhower refused to recognise the day officially. However, in 1974, the day was placed on a more formal basis with International Nurses Day being assigned to 12th May, marking Florence Nightingale's birthday. Rockhampton nurses were quite quick off the mark. Yvonne Kelley's papers include a two page list of each event over most of the following years. The Royal Australian Nursing Federation,

CQ Sub-branch, organised a celebration in 1971 and continued for 17 years. When the branch was disbanded in 1987, IND was taken over by The Royal College of Nursing, CQ Branch. According to Yvonne’s list, the 1971 ceremony was held at

St Paul’s Cathedral with the address by Dr William Hasker, 1972 was at St Joseph’s Cathedral with the address by Dr John Learmonth, 1973 was back to St Paul’s addressed by Dr Alan Agnew, etc. until today when the event is totally secular.



ACHHA members at the 2023 International Nurses Day event on 12th May 2023. (L to R): Carol McIver, Daphne Murdoch, Del Kajewski, Joan Miller, Ailsa Trathen, Dot Broad, Nancy Crapp, Kay Smith, Diann Brooks, Leanne Small, Front: Jacqui Geraghty, Del Leitgeb.

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:
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