



AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY HOSPITAL HERITAGE ASSOCIATION INC

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2007

Christmas Greetings

It's hard to believe that 2007 is coming to an end so soon and we're already talking of Christmas Markets and seeing Christmas trees all through the shops. The year has been a combination of successes and disappointments for the Association. Our successes include the Award reported on in this Newsletter, the excellent work by members at events such as the Rocky Swap, in continuing to build and document our already outstanding collection, and most of all, in seeing our building well in place at the Village with its new roof, stairs, ramps and stumps and not a sign of lead paint or asbestos. We must thank both the Queensland Government and the Rockhampton City Council for the assistance they have given us to date.

Our great disappointment was not receiving funding from the Commonwealth Regional Partnerships program to refurbish the interior so that we can move more of our collection out of the container and into public view. We have been invited to put in a new grant application and we are preparing this. However, we are caught up in the process of the election during which the Government must go into caretaker mode.

Clearly we have a major task ahead of us in 2008 to make sure that we find the resources for refurbishment. Queensland cel-

brates the 150th anniversary of its separation from New South Wales in 2009 so we must have our fully functional museum by then. Rockhampton had its first hospital while we were still part of New South Wales!

We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and an outstanding year in 2008. We look forward to your continuing support to enable us to see this project to a successful completion.

Christmas Markets

Remember the Rockhampton Heritage Village Christmas Markets on Sunday 25th November from 8 am. This should be the biggest markets of the year with in excess of 220 stalls.

Members of the Association will be in attendance to open our display in the Lakes Creek Cottage and a plant stall will be running to raise funds for our museum project.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday, 26th September. The Office Bearers and Management Committee members for the coming 12 months are identified at the end of this Newsletter.

Association wins Museum Award

For anyone who missed the newspaper coverage, we are pleased to advise that the Association has been awarded a 2007 Gallery and Museum Achievement Award (GAMAA). The Awards are made by Museum and Gallery Services Queensland, the peak industry body for museums and galleries throughout the State.

ACHHA was the winner in the category for volunteer run organisations. In its press release, Museum and Gallery Services Queensland made the following points:

“The organisation secured the significant Mount Morgan Hospital Nurses’ Quarters and in 2006 relocated the building to the Rockhampton Heritage Village, with assistance from the Queensland Government and the Rockhampton City Council. The Association developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Queensland Health Department which provided guidelines and support for the ownership and removal of the building. They also established formal procedures for contract management of the building and site works. The building when refurbished will act as the new interpretative centre for the Association and will play an important role in the education and public programs of the Heritage Village”.

President Yvonne Kelley was invited to attend a gala industry dinner at the Gold Coast Arts Centre to receive the Award on behalf of the Association.

This is the second time the Association has been recognised by Museum and Gallery Services Queensland. In 2004, Yvonne received an individual award for her many years of untiring work for the Association.

The photo which follows shows Norma West with the 2007 GAMAA trophy while Yvonne Kelley displays the trophy for her 2004 Award.



A Nurse’s Prayer

The Association’s very large collection of health services memorabilia includes many items which tell the story of the attitudes and beliefs of the dedicated individuals who have served us so well in the past.

Norma West has submitted the following prayer from a 1937 nurse’s autograph book.

*Lord, help me to live from day to day
In such a self forgetting way
That when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for “others”*

*Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I do for you
Must needs be done for “others”*

*Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep; and all in vain
My efforts be to rise again
Unless to live for “others”.*

*And when my work on earth is done
And my new work in heavens begun
May I forget the crown I’ve worn
While thinking still of “others”.*

*“Others” Lord, yes, “others”!
Let this my motto be -
Help me to live for others
That I may live for Thee*

Rockhampton Heritage “History: Live it!” Expo

The Association was well represented at the Rockhampton Heritage “History: Live it!” Expo held at the Walter Reid Centre on Sunday, 21st October 2007.

Members who set up and manned the stall were able to take advantage of the Association’s newly purchased folding display. The photo below shows Committee Members Carol and Bill McIver in front of the display which will be a real asset at events such as this as well as at the heritage Village. If you look carefully you will also see the special aprons with an ACHHA motif which members wear when representing us at functions such as this and the Rocky Swap.



In addition to the static display, Yvonne, assisted by Norma, gave a 30 minute PowerPoint presentation entitled “Hospitals of the Rockhampton District 1858 – 1958”. Yvonne has prepared this presentation which includes many photos of the magnificent buildings which were once used as hospitals in the Central Queensland Region. Unfortunately almost all have been lost to “progress”. Kenmore at the Mater Hospital is a notable exception.

This presentation is a valuable tool to display a segment of the historical collection without risk of loss or damage to the original photos.

Important notices

Rockhampton Heritage Village Christmas Markets

Sunday 25 November

Gates open 8.00 am – in excess of 220 stalls selling handcrafted gifts, plants, timberwork including toys, jewellery, painted glassware, fancy dress costumes, hats and more.

Horse and carriage, vehicle and pony rides for kids \$1.50 each.

Please take the opportunity to visit the Lakes Creek Cottage during these events. You will find our display is open, with members of the Association in attendance.

Association Membership

The Association welcomes your support for our activities.

Membership subscriptions are now due for the financial year 2007-2008.

If you have not yet renewed your membership for this period, or if you wish to join the Association, please contact the secretary, Errol Payne, on 4922 3314 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 ejpayne@bigpond.net.au.

Oral History Dr Mervyn Gold – an example of the ACHHA at work

In pursuing its objective of preserving the health service history of Central Queensland, several members of the Association are actively engaged in interviewing many of the practitioners who contributed to that history through their own distinguished service. The Association plans to have all of these oral histories made available either through electronic media such as CD's or in print after they are transcribed.

When all of the histories are available they will paint a fascinating picture of people with different backgrounds and skills – general practitioners, specialists, nurses and allied health professionals – working together to deliver a service under conditions which were often very different from those we know today.

While the oral histories will provide a great deal of pleasure to all members of the community who are interested in health service provision in the past, they will also provide an outstanding resource for professional historians who may choose to write on this aspect of our community's past development.

To provide a foretaste of what will be available in the Oral History Collection, we have decided with the agreement Dr Mervyn Gold, retired Specialist Dermatologist, to summarise some of the key points which emerged when he was interviewed by Dr Tom Dewar in April 2007. Dr Dewar, an ACHHA Committee Member, is a retired Obstetrician and Gynaecologist.

It must be stressed that the excerpts have been chosen and compiled by the Editor of this Newsletter with a view to providing an overview of the information which emerged during the interview. No attempt has been made to cover all of the items discussed or opinions expressed. Those who wish to see or hear the full story will soon have the opportunity to do so through the work of the Association.

Dr Mervyn Gold – some key points from an oral history as told to Dr Tom Dewar.

Dr Mervyn Gold was born in Mannum on the Murray River and spent his childhood along the Murray. His mother was a school-teacher and his father worked for the Bank of Adelaide. When his father was transferred to the Bank's Port Adelaide Branch he undertook primary schooling in an Anglican school attached to the Church. Later his father was transferred as Manager of a branch at Tailem Bend near where the Murray enters Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina where he continued his primary schooling before attending secondary school at Murray Bridge which is 25 miles to the north. Initially he caught the 6.29 am railmotor to school each day but later boarded with a family at Murray Bridge.

Dr Gold obtained a scholarship for secondary schooling. This was transferred to a University Scholarship at the University of Adelaide which assisted with fees which were the responsibility of the individual at that time. In his third year of medicine, he was the inaugural Lendon Scholar at St Mark's College at the University of Adelaide. The Scholarship helped with the costs of the final three years of his medical degree since it paid his College Entrance fees and gave him a tutorship in physiology which enabled him to stay in College during the University vacation. Dr Gold comments: *"That changed my whole life academically because it was the right environment to study and enjoy University life"*.

Seventeen students, including one woman, commenced the medicine degree in 1933 and thirteen graduated at the end of the six-year course.

[Incidentally, a check of the St Mark's College website on 31 July 2007 revealed that the College was established in 1925 and is still offering a version of the A H Lendon Scholarship for medical students in their

third or fourth year of study.]

By the time of his graduation, World War 2 had broken out 'so St Marks College closed down and everyone went to the war, it was the thing you did automatically, strange as it may seem'.

During the final year of their medical course, students pretty well played the role of Residents, doing 16 appendicectomy operations as a student plus many hernia operations 'for blokes who wanted their's fixed so they could join the AIF.' This experience as a student shortened the Residency to three months Medicine and three months surgery undertaken at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Dr Gold himself joined the AIF for six years and saw action in many of the key theatres of war. After six months of training in Australia, he was shipped to the Middle East to Tobruk where he was one of the Rats of Tobruk with an eight-month stint which included the Siege. Dr Gold speaks highly of Field Marshall Montgomery who, he says, changed the previous strategies and brought about the first defeat of the Germans. Of conditions at Tobruk during the Siege he makes the comment "Well if you like bully beef and biscuits there was no shortage. There was very little sickness and surprisingly little war neurosis".

In the middle part of the War, he was part of the Australian detachment of troops assigned to General Douglas MacArthur's Headquarters. From 1943, he saw service in the Philippines, New Guinea and Borneo. Towards the end of the War when he returned to Australia, he was offered a job on General Mountbatton's staff in India.

However, on his return to Adelaide, Dr Gold considered setting up a general practice there. However, he says "Well I didn't know what to do, as the gallant old bunch that were battling on and refused to retire during the War so they could keep the Flag

flying, and after the War kept the Flag flying and refused to retire'. However, Queensland Director of Health, Dr Abe Fryberg offered him the job of Medical Superintendent of the Rockhampton Hospital which he held from 1946 to 1950.

Dr (later Sir) Abraham Fryberg was a famous Queensland doctor who joined the AIF despite having lost an arm in a car accident. Dr Gold and Dr Fryberg became friends while serving in the Middle East. Dr Gold credits him as being largely responsible for the good health of troops by controlling fly-borne diseases. After the War Dr Fryberg served as Queensland's Director of Health for over 20 years and is well known to many of the region's former medical practitioners.

Dr Gold enjoyed the challenge provided by the role of Medical Superintendent. However, he goes on to say: 'By 1950 I was earning the princely sum of thirteen hundred and five pounds per year, and I said to Abe I would be prepared to stay in this job for a while as I liked it. He said the policy was to move on when you reached the top level of salary, so I moved into Private General Practice'.

The period of private general practice in Rockhampton extended from 1950 – 1966. During this period he was associated with other well-known Rockhampton practitioners including Dr Wylie Gibbons and Dr Con Primmer.

Oral histories such as this help us to understand the conditions experienced by health professionals at the time. The following exchange between Dr Dewar and Dr Gold is enlightening:

Dr Dewar: *Could you enumerate the type of operations you did?*

Dr Gold: *That was the trouble. There was no Flying Doctor and there was no Aerial Ambulance. The bitumen extended*

to the Woolwash and out west to Gracemere so you couldn't send everyone to Brisbane. So we did it all here and I don't think we killed too many. I realised after many years doing a gynaecological repair one day and a thyroid the next including emergency surgery was not the way to go.

Dr Dewar: *And you did a lot of orthopaedics setting fractures?*

Dr Gold: *I can remember for the fracture of the neck of the femur using a Smith Petersen nail, which was the forerunner of the modern pin and plate. So we did a hell of a lot of surgery.'*

Dr Gold's response to a question from Dr Dewar about the present Safe Hours Programme to manage workloads gives an insight into the workload pressures of the time:

"Well Tom, no hours are really safe, but it makes me smile the way they go about it now although I support the programme. When I graduated we were on call 24 hours a day seven days a week as junior residents. If you went to a party you got one of your mates to stand in and then you still did your night round. After the war in general practice you were pretty well on call all the time and even as Superintendent one was on call 24 hours a day or you arranged a stand in. Even people in private practice didn't have weekend cover, they just took the calls all the time. You might be up all night with a confinement and then spend the day on the surgical list. Jack Gillogley, who was the original Radiologist in Rockhampton, was on his own for years and was on call for X-rays seven days a week public and pri-

vate. He never complained about it and took it all in his stride. Forbes, who was the Government Pathologist was an incredible practitioner and would be on call 24 hours a day.'

It must be remembered that many of these practitioners still managed to make important contributions to their communities. While Dr Gold left the army at the end of the war, he stayed in the CMF Reserve, commanding the Ninth Field Ambulance of the CMF in Rockhampton for 12 years. Because of his on-going military role, he was the Deputy Marshall for the Royal Visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1953. He reports that *'it all went very well but it was a relief to see the plane disappear into the distance safely'*.

It was not until 1966 when he was 50 that he decided to specialise in Dermatology and moved with his wife and two daughters who were nursing trainees to Sydney. He spent a year without pay - *'I didn't have much and we lived on mince and frozen vegetables'* - he says.

Over three years in Sydney, he spent a year as an Honorary Fellow in Dermatology *'which sounded great, except that there was no money'*. Then he was awarded a Registrar position - *'they said they would give it to the old bloke who was working for nothing'*. He completed a Diploma in Dermatological Medicine at the University of Sydney before the College of Dermatology was formed, so that he later held two qualifications - the Diploma in Dermatological Medicine as well as being a Fellow of the Australasian College of Dermatologists.

On returning to Rockhampton, he specialised in Dermatology until his retirement in 2002. While dermatologists treat a wide variety of medical conditions, Dr Gold became particularly well known for his expertise in treating skin cancers, a major problem in tropical Queensland. As a specialist, he also played a role in the education of oth-

er regional practitioners and notes that *'I have tried to impart as much dermatological knowledge as I could over the past 40 years to general practitioners in Rockhampton, where the standard of skin care is high'*.

When all of these oral histories are available, they will provide fascinating insights into how members of the profession worked together. Dr Gold confirmed during this interview that for thirty years, he and very well-known Rockhampton Pathologist Dr Tom Lynch spent about four hours every Saturday morning going through the skin slides to compare diagnoses and ensure accurate outcomes for patients. Where uncertainty remained, they sent the slides to Professor Vincent McGovern, who was regarded as *'the doyen of skin pathology, particularly melanoma'*.

The oral history includes more detailed discussion of medical issues, insights into

the relationship between doctors and nurses at the time and the ways in which it has changed, medical ethics, the role of Hospital Boards in the late 1940's, insights into the contributions of Sister Elizabeth Kenny, famous for her role in the treatment of poliomyelitis, and an account of living through the 1949 Rockhampton cyclone which he describes as *'Horrific. You have to go through a severe cyclone to realise how terrifying it can be. It is different altogether from war time, because of a crescendo of noise which reaches a peak and stays there, and everything is falling around you.'*

Dr Gold spent the night at the hospital which was partly unroofed. He also tells us that there was a patient in the respirator or "iron lung" which stopped working because of a 24-hour power failure. A crew of ex-servicemen was organised to manually pump the respirator during the night until power was restored. Further information about this event is available in the iron lung display at the Heritage Village.

ACHHA to develop website

At the November meeting of the Management Committee, the decision was taken to work on the development of a website for the country hospital collection during 2008. Over the past few years, the web has become an essential tool to enable museums to share their collections with the community as well as with researchers. The first step is to convert our outstanding photographic collection to digital form by scanning it. A great deal of this has already happened with a selection of the photos being used in the calendars produced in 2005 and 2006 and in Yvonne's PowerPoint presentation on Rockhampton's hospitals from 1858 to 1958.

The next important step is to ensure that we consult with our members to make sure that we have accurate captions for all of the photographs while the information is fresh in people's memories.

To give you an idea of what is possible when our information is on the web, I have chosen, as an example, information about one of our important nurses, Matron Ida Marie Axelsen who was born in Tiaro on 29 January 1878 and died in 1968. She was Matron at Westwood in the late 1920's. Her Sister Clara was Matron in the 1930's. A photo of Clara with some of the staff at Westwood was shown in one of the calendars.

A number of photographs of the Axelsen sisters are available at the State Library of Queensland and may be accessed through the National Library of Australia website called "Pictures Australia" <http://www.pictureaustralia.org> Simply go to that website and type in Axelsen.

For example, the following photograph shows Ida on the veranda at Westwood in the late 1920's.



lection. I acknowledge the source of these photos and the accompanying information is the website of the State Library of Queensland accessed via Picture Australia.



If you go to the website you will be able to see a photo of Ida and Clara together. However, I was particularly taken by the photograph of Ida in the uniform of the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1919 when she was 41.

From the material on the State Library of Queensland website we learn that Ida was involved in nine trips on the hospital ship Kanowna which is pictured opposite. Imagine the challenges she faced in the middle of World War 1.

We hope that some of our photos might one day be available through this national col-



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Elected Office Bearers

President: Yvonne Kelley
Vice-President: Norma West
Secretary: Errol Payne
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Committee Members

Lorraine Antonello
Tom Dewar
John Learmonth
Carol McIver
Bill McIver
Jocelyn Philp