



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

President's Report

Welcome to all as I attempt my report for this newsletter.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the management committee, members and volunteers for their continuing enthusiasm as we move forward in our second year of Covid restrictions.

As stated in the previous newsletter, we are taking advantage of the Standards Review Program, offered by the state-wide Museums and Galleries Association. The program moves to a different part of the state each year, and 2021 is the turn of Central Queensland.

Our small working group set up to manage the review has worked well together and with a huge thank you to Errol, we have met the targets and managed to submit the paper work required on time.

In the first half of the year, we were given three detailed survey questionnaires to complete, with one month allocated to each. One covered "Managing the Museum", the second covered "Involving people" and the third was about "Developing a significant collection". Completing these forms gave us the chance to really think about our collection and our policies. These were sent to our reviewers, one Queensland based and one in Victoria, and they provided feedback by the end of July.

The plan was for them to visit us for a full day of discussions and feedback in August. However, because of Covid the visit has been delayed until an uncertain date because the Queensland border is closed to Victorians. The way things are going, there is a possibility that the program will not be completed until next year.

While we were a little disappointed that the visit did not go as planned, we also breathed a sigh of relief to have the extra time to continue with the preparations in readiness for the onsite visit.

The reopening of the Heritage Village to the public was met with great excitement.

On opening day we were overwhelmed by the

number of people that showed up. The number of visitors to the museum was a rewarding surprise. We felt we had come alive again.

Since the reopening, the school tours have recommenced and the increasing number of tourists is evident each week.

Well done, Queensland.

The work at the museum is still a work in progress. However we are making progress and I'm sure we will meet the challenges with enthusiasm and continue to move forward.

We would welcome new volunteers as there is still an overwhelming amount of work to be done.

Our vision for the future is to have more freedom in this Covid world and have a museum worthy of the work of both past and present people.

All the signs are there, the comments in the visitors' book are very encouraging and we look forward to welcoming back interstate and international visitors.

Together we can and will make it happen.

Del Leitgeb
President

Our Stories

We all know that there are many photographs in our collection. However, we are not so familiar with the stories, written over about 50 years by health professionals, and collected by Yvonne Kelley. There are about 150 stories, all of which have been digitised to preserve them for the future. Some are very short, others long. Actually some of them were used in 2013 when the International Nurses Day Organising Committee published the small book, "Shades of Nursing".

While I promised in the February edition to prepare a series of stories about nurses who served in World War 2, we have been busy with the Standards Review, so I decided to take a "shortcut" and use two stories from our collection which were written by Betty West.

Nurses in World War 2 - Stories by Elizabeth (Betty) West

Elizabeth (Betty) West, née Francis, has been a supporter of our Association from its inception, having joined in 1999. We have the benefit of photographs and stories which Betty donated early in the life of the museum.

Betty began her nursing studies at the Rockhampton Hospital in February 1944. However, her mother died on the 31st October that year and she had to suspend her training to help her father care for her four siblings. She recommenced her studies in 1947 and graduated on 4th December 1949.

This photograph shows Betty on the steps of the Rockhampton Hospital's Isolation Ward in 1948. Betty said that there was another cottage adjacent to this where there was separate accommodation for three isolation nurses.



Betty wrote stories about her training days, her time in the isolation ward in Quarry Street, and her experiences when a troop train bringing ill and injured soldiers from New Guinea stopped in Rockhampton for the night and soldiers were transferred to the hospital.

A more unusual story is about a cottage near the isolation building which the nurses referred to as the Crystal Palace. This where women who had acquired venereal diseases were

secured behind high wire fences and padlocked gates. The problem was quite severe because there were in excess of 8,000 members of the US military services based in Rockhampton and surrounds during the Battle of the Coral Sea. These women were only transferred to the main hospital if they became very unwell.

In this newsletter we will use a World War 2 story told to Betty by her Aunt, Lieutenant Doris Edith Francis, who was a member of the Australian Army Nursing Service and who served on Thursday Island when the Battle of the Coral Sea was in progress. Doris had trained at the Rockhampton Hospital between 4th March 1929 and 4th March 1933.

This photograph shows Doris in her AANS uniform.



These are the words which Betty wrote after her conversation with Doris.

"My Aunt, Doris Francis, worked as a nursing sister at the hospital on Thursday Island from 1941 until 1945. In September 1988 she visited Rockhampton for the commemoration of the Centenary of the Nursing School of the Rockhampton Base Hospital, where she had trained in the 1920s.

She brought with her an autograph book and photos of the wartime period on Thursday Island. 'Everyone talks about the bombing of Darwin' she said to me. 'But you never hear anything about the bombing of T.I.' (T.I. was the term used by the inhabitants of Thursday Island.)

For the first time she told me about her life on Thursday Island during the 1940s.

Sister Doris Francis went to Thursday Island from the Maryborough Hospital in 1941. Her friend, Sister Edna Gilbert, was appointed matron of the Thursday Island Hospital in April 1941 and Doris joined her on the nursing staff of the hospital.

Thursday Island is 30 miles to the north-west of Cape York. The island is about 1.5 miles long, three quarters of a mile wide and is surrounded by seven small islands, including Horn Island and Booby Island.

During 1941, the population of Thursday Island consisted of 300 - 400 persons, mostly Europeans, Malays, Chinese plus about 400 Japanese engaged in pearl fishing.

The Australian Army had sent up a small garrison of 600 personnel and the Navy had a small complement there also.

Sister Gilbert and Sister Francis used to travel to the neighbouring islands to attend to sick natives.

On 7th December 1941, Japan entered the war. The Navy brought in the pearling luggers and the Japanese were interned in the south of Australia. All women were evacuated, except for essential personnel. Missionaries were evacuated from the Torres Strait Islands and two signal boys were left on each island.

Sisters Gilbert and Francis continued to run the civilian hospital, caring for many evacuees from New Guinea.

After the Japanese bombed Darwin in 1942 their planes flew over Thursday Island, flying over the hospital. Some of the servicemen stationed there realised they were Japanese Zeros. American Kittyhawks appeared on the scene and after a "dog fight" two of the Zeros were brought down. At that time none of the staff had "tin hats" and there were no air raid shelters. Following the air raid, shelters were built. The following air raid alarm instructions were alongside a decrepit bath tub.

Should a Jap plane come in sight,
Beat the bath tub with all your might,
Blow the whistle, blow like hell,

If you've got one, ring a bell,
Grab your rifle, gas masks and smokes,
Don't waste time cracking silly jokes,
Run for the jungle, helter skelter,
Stay under cover, until you hear
Blast on the whistle which means "all clear!"

After the first strafing by the Japanese, all of the civilian medical and nursing staff of the hospital left except for the quarantine doctor, Sister Gilbert and Sister Francis. The hospital was taken over by the army. As Sister Gilbert and Sister Francis were still classed as civilians, they did not receive any pay for six months.

Sister Gilbert flew to Brisbane to sign them up for A.A.N.S. army service. During this period Sister Francis was the only female on the island for 14 days.

The Navy personnel washed uniforms etc. At one stage they had to use sanitary pads for dressings and serviettes for slings. A severe outbreak of dengue fever occurred. Sick patients looked after the more sick ones. One of the boys on one of the islands became sick and the doctor had to go to the island to attend to him.

The Japanese Zeros came over one day at lunch time so they had to feed the patients outside in the shelters. The Zeros strafed them again and then flew over Horn Island where the American Air Force was stationed and strafed the base. On the way back they bombed an American ship. The casualties were brought to the hospital on Thursday Island.

The doctor, Sister Francis and Sister Gilbert worked all night in the operating theatre. My Aunt was very proud of the fact that they had nursed an American serviceman with a ruptured appendix back to complete health. As they had very little equipment this was quite an achievement.

During this period, she said that at no time did she and Sister Gilbert have to worry about being the only females on the island.

The supplies for the hospital came up in little bags. During the Battle of the Coral Sea they had to have two suitcases packed.

My Aunt said 'If it hadn't been for the intervention of the U.S.A. during the Battle of the Coral Sea there would have been a different outcome for the Battle. If the Japanese had completely bombed Thursday Island and Horn Island where the American Air Force was situated there would

have been no stopping them.

In 1945 Sister Francis and Sister Gilbert were transferred to 2/2 Australian General Hospital near Atherton where they were discharged from the Army.

The Camp Hospital on Thursday Island ceased to function on 25 April 1946 and was handed back to civilian authorities. Sister Gilbert, having been discharged from the Army, was there to receive it back. Sister Francis returned to the registered nursing staff at the Maryborough Hospital. She later married Frederick Kindt. When Fred died, Doris, at age 60, completed a refresher course at the Maternal and Child Welfare Home at Toowoomba. She was then appointed to the nursing staff at the Maternal and Child Welfare Home, Corberry Street, Rockhampton and worked there until she retired at 65 years of age. After her retirement she lived in Brisbane. Sister Doris Francis died in December 1988 at the age of 79."

Elizabeth West

Another of Betty's short stories is reproduced below. The story reminds us that in many theatres of war in the tropics and in parts of Africa, doctors and nurses spent a large proportion of their time treating diseases rather than war wounds. Also recall that one of the nurses discussed in the February Newsletter actually served on a Queensland Ambulance Train.

"TROOP TRAIN VISIT PROMPTED MEMORIES

Extract from "Elizabeth's Ramblings" – A compilation of stories by Elizabeth Madeline West, née Francis, 2005

During the Coral Sea celebrations early in May, 1992, there was a re-enactment of the troop train journey to Townsville. This re-enactment brought back to me poignant memories of wartime troop trains.

In 1944, I was a 17-year-old student nurse on the staff at Rockhampton Base Hospital. It was during my three-month stint of continuous night duty, as a junior nurse in men's medical ward, that I gained first-hand knowledge of troop trains.

The trains would arrive at Stanley Street railway station, Rockhampton, at any time during those night shifts. The sick soldiers were then transferred to RBH. During that period of the war, a 'soldiers' ward', as it was called, was set up attached to the men's medical ward. When that

was full, the overflow of sick soldiers was admitted to the men's medical ward.

The majority of the soldiers were in hospital with malaria. All were fighting in the New Guinea campaign against the Japanese. Sometimes, for weeks on end, they lived, ate and slept in water-logged trenches or 'dug outs'. Three types of malaria were diagnosed among these soldiers:

1. Cerebral type - the soldiers became rapidly comatose.
2. Gastro intestinal form, characterised by severe diarrhoea and vomiting.
3. Blackwater Fever - this was a very serious form.

Repeated attacks of Malaria were very exhausting and could eventually cause serious anaemia.

Numbers of these soldiers were put in hospital more than once with malaria attacks. Some suffered from the effects of severe malaria attacks for the rest of their lives. Upon their discharge from hospital, they were given a supply of 'atebrin' tablets to use as a preventative against recurrence of the disease.

A vivid memory of one particular night has remained with me till this day. About 2 am, a troop train arrived at the Stanley Street station. Sick soldiers were transferred to the Base Hospital. There were too many for the vacant beds in the soldiers' ward, so the remainder were admitted to the men's medical ward.

Tired, dirty, dishevelled, young men, most only a year or two older than I was, carried their kit bags and were in full uniform, muffled in heavy great coats and complete with slouch hats, heavy army boots and gaiters. The first thing we gave them was a cigarette. Cigarettes weren't easy to come by during the war. We nurses always managed to keep some in a cupboard for the soldiers. (Just imagine giving a sick person a cigarette these days). A very young, very sick soldier said to me, "Please nurse, can I have a lovely, hot bath?" Well I ran a bath for him. He said: "This is heaven." Then the senior sister on night duty appeared on the scene. She almost collapsed on the spot. That soldier had a very elevated temperature, and no way should he have been having a hot bath. Fortunately, he suffered no ill effects.

As soon as the soldiers were declared fit for duty, they were sent back to the jungles of New Guinea.

International Nurses Day 2021

Holding a function to mark International Nurses Day in May has become quite a strong tradition in Rockhampton. Last year’s ceremony was planned but didn’t happen due to Covid-19. This was a pity because quite a lot of preparation was done to mark the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale’s birth on 12 May 1820. However the preparations done then were put to good use at this year’s function. Matthew Johnson had worked with a group of actors to make a video of Florence in uniform in the ward in our Museum. He also conducted a mock interview with Florence, taking advantage of several books about her in our library. Quite a few of her sayings are quite well known.

So Florence Nightingale was actually the guest at the 2021 function held at the Rockhampton Jockey Club. The function was well attended and was most enjoyable.

Our Association members always book a table and overfill it. Here is a photograph taken on the night.



(L-R) Nancy Crapp, Errol Payne, Daphne Murdoch, Del Kajewski, Joan Miller, Dot Broad, Joan Lorroway, Del Leitgeb, Jackie Geraghty, Del Rogers and Carol McIver.

If you are a Facebook user, type “Rockhampton International Nurses Day” into the search box and then look for the 2021 album.

The second Lady Goodwin Hospital

The first Lady Goodwin Maternity Hospital as part of the Rockhampton Hospital was opened with much fanfare in 1930. It was a photogenic building, so there are plenty of photographs in the collection. This Lady Goodwin building was used as a maternity hospital until the late 1950s when it

became the private ward, renal unit, Doctor’s recreation room and library.

The second Lady Goodwin Maternity Hospital facing Quarry Street was much more ordinary and photographs are much harder to come by. However, this one was taken by Desma Phipps from the third floor of the Nurses Quarters.



These maternity wards served until the opening of the new Medical Services building in 1986 when the maternity wards were relocated to the top floor of that building.

The little hospital that grew!

As we view the size and complexity of the present Rockhampton Hospital, we should cast our minds back to the first Rockhampton Hospital built on the river bank in 1858, almost a year before Queensland was declared a separate state.

We have a copy of the letter written on 1st October 1858 by the Colonial Architect, Alexander Dawson, to the Secretary for Lands and Public Works, both based in Sydney, stating that he had dispatched via the “Wonga Wonga” steamer one iron building and four wooden buildings, including one 20 ft. square and 12 ft. high for the male hospital, one 12 ft. square for the female hospital, and one 12 ft. square for a Medical Officer’s Dispensary.

He also sent bricks, lime and other necessary materials plus 4 large and one small tent, an iron safe, and provisions for the workmen in case of emergency.

He also wrote “To put up these buildings, and perform any other works in connection therewith that might be found necessary on the spot, I despatched , under charge of Mr. Jas. Moore, Clerk of Works, 6 carpenters and 1 laborer, all men accustomed to such work.”

Mary Jane Hood, the first nurse trained in Queensland

I'm sure that all of our members are aware that Miss Mary Jane Hood was the first nurse to complete her training in Queensland. She commenced training at the Port Curtis and Leichhardt district Hospital in March 1885 and completed in March 1888. She was appointed Matron of the hospital in April 1888 and held the position until 1906. The Hospital's name changed to Rockhampton Hospital in 1895.

Given the time period involved, photographs are quite rare and surviving copies of poor quality. However, this verified photograph, published on 4th May 1895 in the *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, referred to "Miss M J Hood, the kind and patient matron". The other nurses were not identified but are likely to include nurse trainees at the time, Florence Haylock, Annie Brizzel and Caroline Campbell.



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.

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