

LOCAL HISTORY FEATURE



BUNDABERG BASE HOSPITAL

RESIDENTS of Bundaberg today may be familiar with the ongoing additions and expansion of our Base Hospital, but spare a thought for the early residents of this town before 1875. They had no hospital, but instead relied on local Chemist Mr C. Coffey to treat everything from colds to pulling teeth.

In 1878 concerned citizens decided to address this problem, and formed a Hospital Fund Committee with elected Trustees. Permission was given in May 1879 for a temporary hospital to be situated in Ward 2 of the Immigration Barracks in Finemore Park, opposite today's Base Hospital. At the same time, according to the *Bundaberg Daily News*, "3 acres, 3 roods has been permanently reserved for a hospital site."

Plans went ahead to build a permanent Hospital, and in 1880 the tender to build was awarded to Mr Midson, with construction completed in February 1881. Known as the Cottage Hospital, it was a four room timber cottage, with a kitchen and separate Kanaka ward.



bun02015 First Hospital ca1885



bun02024 Hospital after additions ca1890s



bun01712 Lithograph of First Hospital
ca1890

Over the next few years, with the help of a Government grant, additions were made to the building, including a well, windmill and infectious diseases ward, mainly for typhoid cases.

The first surgeon appointed was Dr D'Arcy Sugden in June 1879, at an annual salary of £80. When he left later that year, Dr T.H. May became Medical Superintendent until his death in 1916. The Hospital Committee still made the majority of operating decisions with regard to the running and administration and over the years recorded some interesting resolutions. In January 1881, *The Bundaberg & Mt Perry Mail & General Advertiser* reported that:

"...if the surgeon is of the opinion that the patient suffering from cancer is able to do light work, she is to assist the matron as required, if she refuse to do so the surgeon to dismiss her from the institution..."



bun02057 Dr T.H. May, Matron A. Scott
and nursing staff ca1911

A New Hospital

In 1898, almost twenty years after the foundation of the first Hospital, the question of a hospital to meet the growing population was raised by the Hospital Committee. At the time, most surgical cases of any complexity were sent to Brisbane, and the Committee felt it was time to "raise the status of the institution so that a wide range of surgical cases could be undertaken." This also meant a staff of trained nurses would need to be engaged, and Mr J.C.Walker, then Secretary of the Committee, proposed that the hospital should be a training school for nurses as well. While an operating theatre was erected in the existing building, the cost of rebuilding older parts of the Hospital led to the idea of commissioning plans for a larger Hospital built in brick.



bun01078 Building the Base Hospital
ca 1914

Planning proper did not begin until 1910 when the Hospital Committee negotiated a land swap with the Town Council. The land, seven acres in Queens Park, was gazetted a hospital reserve by the State Government. Plans for the new hospital saw the original budget estimate of £5000 increase to at least £10,400 by 1911, with the final winning tender from Mr N.C. Steffensen coming in at £13,257.

Features

Architect Mr F.H. Faircloth designed a two storey building, with three sections all connected by passage-ways. The plan had female wards in the Eastern Wing, Executive offices in the central section and Male Wards in the Western Wing. Both Wards had two floors with Wards of eight beds in each, as well as two private wards



bun01056 Bundaberg Base Hospital
ca 1914/15



bun02008 Bundaberg Base Hospital 1914

Bundaberg Hospital.

List of Subscribers to the Bundaberg Hospital for Quarter ending June 30th, 1911: P. A. Morley £2/2/, W. T. Bates £1, Gospel Hall £2 10/, H. Bates £1, W. G. Still £1/1/, R. Moore Steele 10/, G. J. Page £1/1/, J. D. Bettiens 10/, W. Tasker £1/1/, Dr. May £2, Eight Hour Day Collections £11/2/, Kolan Shire Council £3/3/, Kronheimers Ltd., £1/1/, A. Dunne £1/1/, Thomas Jensen £1, Mr. J. Steindl £1/1/, H. M. Glover £1/1/, Milliquin Sugar Co., £5/5/, A.U.S.N. Co. £1/1/, P. Neilson £1/1/, Dr. Remco £1/1/, Bank New South Wales £3/3/, W. Eadie £1/1/, H. Rode £1/1/, H. T. Christen £1/1/4, E. S. Hale £1/1/, J. Black £1/1/, F. W. Payne £1/1/, H. E. Spence £1/1/, the Athole Masonic Lodge £2/2/, L. H. Maynard £1/1/, J. Comino £1/1/, Royal Bank £2/2/, S. F. Luke £1/1/, Campbell and Amos £2/2/, H. Rowland £1/1/, Ernest Osborne £1/1/, G. J. Young £1/1/, H. G. Hurst £1/1/, Cullinanes Ltd. £1/1/, W. Reid £1/1/, Healy and Gran £1/1/, J. A. Sinclair £1/1/, J. Flowers 5/, Wyper Bros. £1/1/, C. F. Neilson £1/1/, G. H. Bennett £1/1/, G. M. Krieger £1/1/, Dr. E. Schmidt £1/1/, Thos. Garland £1/1/, G. Buss £1/1/, S. McCracken £1/1/, A. Cairnie £1/1/, Dr. T. W. Francis £2/2/, T. Penny £2/2/, N. Mein £1/1/, S. N. Innes £2/2/, Jas. Little £5, Tyrian Masonic Lodge £2/2/, W. J. Corrigan £1/1/, E. Brady £1/1/, F. C. Brown and Co. £1/1/, H. Morris £1/1/, Mark Masonic Lodge E.O., £2/2/, D. Scott £1/1/, H. Hall £1/1/, The Bundaberg Hardware Co. £1/1/, Nurse Boxes £3/10/2/, H. N. Thorburn £1/1/, Lyons and Stollnow £1/1/, Dunn Bros. £1/1/ "Daily News" £1/1/, Clark Bros. £1/1/., F. Buss £2/2/, John Sheehy 5/, G. A. Buss £1/1/, J. H. Thomas £1/1/, Bonna Plantation £3, A. C. Wiles £1/1/, W. Phillips £1/1, R. Ruddell £1/1, P. O. E. Hawkes,

in the Executive section. The main entrance had the surgery on the right, and operating theatre on the left, with the Dispensary at the rear. Other facilities included two dining rooms on the ground floor, and a kitchen, with two lifts—one for patients, and one for catering. Matron's and Nurses' quarters were on the second floor of the Executive section, as well as more wards. Ceilings were steel, and a layer of felt was laid between the ground and second floor to deaden the noise.

Ceremonies

The hospital was expected to be completed in fifteen months, and the foundation stone was laid on November 16, 1911 by Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Queensland. Bundaberg had a public holiday to mark the occasion, with all shops closing at noon.

The Bundaberg Daily News considered the event "...an important one, in that it marks an epoch in the history of the Bundaberg Hospital, and should be fittingly observed." And it was, with a procession through town of bands, school children and local organizations. The Council and Hospital Committee also used the event as a chance to push for more public donations, as by then the expected cost of building the Hospital had grown to £13,500.

Fund Raising Efforts

Local citizens of Bundaberg were tireless in their efforts to raise funds for the Hospital, and had raised a considerable amount even before State Government awarded a subsidy to the project. From performances of *M'liss*, *the Miner's Daughter* by the Gordon Club Dramatic Society, to organisations such as the Ministering Children's League, who purchased a child's cot for the new Hospital, fundraising fever took over Bundaberg for several years.

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bun00878 Bundaberg Hospital with completed Nurses Quarters ca 1915

The newspapers each day recorded the growing list of donors and fundraising events, and urged even more enthusiastic contributions,

“The Government endowment is at the rate of £2 for every pound raised by private subscription...In its finished form the structure will represent an expenditure in money of £13,500, which means that the citizens’ contributions will require to reach ...say £5,000 including fitting and furnishings. Considered in the lump this is a substantial figure; distributed over a community such as ours, as is right it should be...it is a mere bagatelle. And therefore, the burden is one that should sit upon the community very lightly...and there should be the resolve of every man and woman whose heart beats responsive to the sacred claims of charity.”

Hospital Saturday

Hospital Saturday, held for a number of years, proved to be extremely successful. Badges were pinned on anyone in town who donated 1/- and up—mainly to give other collectors an idea who not to target. Schoolchildren collected eggs from home and farms, and brought them to school, and many then went to Mr J. Gibson, a tailor who lived in Bourbon Street. His entrepreneurial idea of dyeing them different colours proved an instant success with the public, and were sold at his store (of course), and at Hospital stalls through town for 2d each.

The New Hospital

By 1914 the new building was finished, and thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Hospital Community and local residents, it was opened free of debt on July 9. At the time, the Nurses Quarters at the rear of the Hospital were still under construction at an expected cost of £1,944, but the ceremonies went on regardless.

Queensland Governor Sir William MacGregor made a return trip to Bundaberg to officially open the Hospital for which he had laid a Foundation Stone in 1911. The State Government had made endowments of £8,838 toward the Hospital, while the Bundaberg district had raised £5,145. The

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Governor mentioned to a crowd of thousands, that the opening would probably be his last as a representative of the Crown, and noted the changes in the medical profession and public hospitals since his years as a surgeon under the late Lord Lister.



bun01015 Postcard of Bundaberg Hospital ca1915



bun01899 Bundaberg Hospital ca1920s



bun01379 Bundaberg Hospital ca1950s



bun01004 Bundaberg Hospital no date

As the face of the Hospital changes again in 2010, there is almost no resemblance now to those original plans accepted by the Hospital Committee back in 1911, almost 100 years ago. Fortunately, images preserved over the years remind us of what a beautifully designed and constructed building Mr F. H. Faircloth and Mr N. C. Steffensen presented to the Bundaberg people on its completion in 1914.

Sue Gammon
Bundaberg Library

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