

Nursing at The London Hospital in the 1960s

I was concerned to be asked to talk about the 1960's as I have more vivid memories of my training days in the 1940's. I fear the loss of more recent memory is a sign of increasing age. However copies of the 'League Review' and 'The London Hospital Log' have served as good reminders and it is a great pleasure to share some of these memories with you.

In March 1960, Sir John Mann retired from his post as Chairman of the Board of Governors and his cheerful jovial presence was enormously missed by all. A cocktail party for 300 people was held in May and Sir John was succeeded by Sir Harry Moore who is now Chairman of our Regional Health Authority.

The new ambulance entrance was completed at the back of the Alexandra Wing and our first new post-anaesthetic recovery ward was opened at the West end of the theatre corridor. How very modern it seemed then but how small it seems now. It is scarcely able to contain all the anaesthetised patients who need to recover there before being transferred back to the wards. Also in 1960 the first open heart surgery at The London took place.

In 1961 we said goodbye to Miss Ceris Jones who had served the hospital as Matron with distinction for 10 years. We welcomed Miss Friend in August of that year to succeed her. She also became President of the League with the retirement from that office of Clare, Lady Mann. Also in that year Princess Marina presented badges and certificates to the Nurses, Captain Brierley retired and Mr Scarlett became House Governor.

The convalescent home at Felixstowe and Fairfield Home in Reigate closed. I suppose we might say that this was the beginning of the end for our smaller annexes because sadly this March we have closed the last of them, Hayes Grove at Bromley.

In 1962, on August Bank Holiday five newly constructed wards were opened and in the 'League Review' Gwyneth Fry gives a very vivid account of the move into the five new wards of the Link Block. By the end of 1963, John Harrison House had been completed and occupied, the first of our residences of which we still have cause to be proud, although shortage of funds at present leaves us with too little money to keep them adequately upgraded.

Also in 1963 the Royal Worcester porcelain models of The London Hospital Sister were produced at the cost of £34 -10 shillings. They are worth a great deal more than that now.

In 1964 The London was the first Hospital in England to install its own computer. We have now clearly worn out the computer Mark 2 and this is causing some frustration at present as elderly computers seem to suffer from chronic indigestion which slows up progress through the system considerably. Every time we try to feed it with information it refuses and tells us to wait!

In 1965 the biggest event was the opening of the new Dental Institute with 90 Dental chairs. The London is of course in the forefront of dental care in Tower Hamlets as well as dental education.

Also in 1965, our first Intensive Therapy Unit opened in the Alexandra Wing in the attics with space for six patients. Haemodialysis was proceeding and hyperbaric oxygen was being used to treat patients with varying conditions including frostbite. We treated one or two intrepid mountaineers as well as other patients with less memorable conditions.

On 1966 an in-service training for Nursing Auxiliaries was started. An important event for professional nursing was the publication of the report on senior nursing staff structure known to us all as 'The Salmon Report'.

An important event in my own life in 1966, was that I succeeded Margaret Cutcliffe as Deputy Matron, and Esther Hindley and Yvonne Bevington were also appointed Assistant Matrons. With different titles we still work together and I am enormously grateful for the support and help they continue to give.

In 1967 plans were in hand to demolish the Alexandra Wing and build a new block. That new building we expect to be completed next year and ready for occupation in 1982. It will still be known as the Alexandra Wing. A new dialysis unit was nearing completion and cardiac surgery was being extended.

An important happening in February 1967 was the opening of an Interdenominational Christian Centre. There was an inaugural service attended by the Bishop of London, Cardinal Heenan and the General Secretary of the Free Church Council. Our present Chaplains are still in sympathy with the ecumenical movement.

In 1968 Mile End and St. Clement's Hospitals joined with The London, "to provide the best possible hospital service for Tower Hamlets". Our student nurses and some trained staff moved from The London to train and take up new posts at these hospitals and the process of integration began.

In 1969 the implementation of 'The Salmon Report' began in earnest at The London. Miss Friend became Chief Nursing Officer for the new group and ten senior nursing officers were appointed.

Throughout these years life was not entirely earnest, and had its lighter moments. Festivities continued each Christmas with the decorating of the wards and the tea parties, and the visits of Father Christmas and the Fairies, and the medical students Christmas show. The tea party continued in Matron's flat on New Year's Day, and there was an annual nurses' dance. This took place in one of the big London hotels every three years. February 13th, 1968 was the last dance in that decade and was held in the Grosvenor House Hotel. The more agile danced the twist and the frug!

At this time money was coming in for a brave new project. A new recreation centre was planned and eventually became the Three Feathers. This has enabled the nurses and many other members of staff to have a club and meeting place of their own. Social events are held there including the ever popular discos, for after all one

must not forget that this was the swinging 60's. Our young people certainly enjoyed themselves in their off-duty periods and were as enthusiastic about the Beatles as all the other members of their generation.

Looking back on these ten years there seems to have been a steady development in professional nursing and in new facilities for patients and staff. In the specialities of Intensive Therapy and haemodialysis the qualified nurse certainly extended her role. At first dialysis procedures were carried out by medical staff assisted by a nurse but soon all procedures passed to the nursing staff and they are now the experts.

The development of Joint Board courses has enabled nurses to develop greater clinical expertise in many different fields. The advent of 'The Salmon Report' encouraged nurses to take a greater part in management and decision making.

Alongside nursing service goes nursing education, so I will hand you over to Mrs Crispin who will remind you of the developments in Nursing Education in the 60's.

M.Culpeck

Social and educational changes.

I want to begin by putting this time into perspective. This was the beginning of the permissive society and the age of violence. It was the time of Flower Power, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Twist, the Mini skirt.

In 1962 I was sister in Ejizabeth Ward in Brentwood waiting for Miss Friend to give permission for nurses to wear lipstick. When the great day came and I appeared with my lipstick in front of the students I found that not one of them was wearing any. When I discussed this with them they told me they weren't going to wear it any more!!

In 1960 Mr Harold MacMillan was our Prime-Minister. He said "You've never had it so good before and you'll never have it so good again". Worth reflecting on.

The new motorways were being built leading to an increase in very serious accidents. Many new universities were opening. Space research was developing rapidly with its enormous spin-offs in general medicine. The first landing on the moon took place.

The country was shattered by the Aberfan disaster. President Kennedy, his brother and Dr Martin Luther King were all killed.

In 1960 the site was chosen for the new School of Nursing. In September, 1961, an experiment in bedside nursing began, leading to the appointment of clinical teachers. Our first two were Miss Peggy Brown, and Miss Sonia Poulson followed by Miss

Culpeck and Miss Torrance, and they set the scene for the present day clinical teachers.

In 1962 the General Nursing Council syllabus was revised and the study-day system was superseded by the tutorial system in 1963, and we were the first training school in the country to receive approval to train students according to the new optional syllabus.

Miss McCreath had returned from Canada and took up her post as Tutor-in-charge of Tredegar House. She and two tutors directed the Preliminary Training course and the two tutors then became the course tutors throughout the students' training. The preliminary State examination was discontinued.

At this time the Set Representative Council was set up and each set chose a member to serve on this Council and discuss current events.

On 25th April 1967, the new School of Nursing was opened by Princess Alexandra. And memories of the attic classroom in the Luckes Home remain. Students were allowed to stay out till midnight. They lived in the Luckes Home and did not go to Tredegar House which was closed.

In 1968 the first group of pupils began training for the Roll. Miss Bridge and I started training these pupils and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The pupils age group covered a wide range from 18-45 years, and it was interesting to notice the influence of the older, more mature, pupil on the younger ones. Many countries were represented too.

The course also included a ten-week course in home nursing in the Borough of Newham and prepared the pupils for the Home Nursing Certificate of the Queens Institute of District Nursing. Pupils wear a uniform of the same material as the students but with straight sleeves and an American style cap.

In the same year students began a 4½ year course to prepare them for a degree in Economics and training for State Registration. Miss P. Lynch was the tutor in charge.

Towards the end of the sixties a film was made as part of a recruitment campaign. It was called 'Not so much a training...' 'More a way of life' being inferred. It gave a general view of life at The London Hospital and many of the staff enjoyed making it very much.

In 1965 we celebrated the 100th anniversary of Edith Cavell's birthday and the 50th of her death. I have vivid memories of going to Brussels and meeting Queen Fabiola and of the Service in the Anglican Church with the congregation singing "Abide with me".

In April, 1966, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of The London Hospital Annexe at Brentwood. The patients had special food and there was a party in the evening. The sisters study-day in May was held at Brentwood and they had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

I could go on telling stories of the Sixties for a long time but I want to hand you to Miss Robbins who will talk about the seventies.

M.E. Crispin

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