

Newsletter '09

THE ST GEORGE HOSPITAL GRADUATE NURSES' ASSOCIATION

President's Report

Welcome to the 63rd reunion of the St George Hospital Graduate Nurse's Association. Dates and times fly by so quickly with the memories of nursing fading a little which makes it so rewarding to meet with old friends and colleagues at this special event. The last reunion held at the Leagues Club in 2008 proved very successful and gave the committee hope for the future in promoting our history of training. Thank you for keeping in touch and if you know of any graduates who are not on the mailing list please give their details to a committee member.

The committee held a working bee to try and sort the many photographs of people and past events in the Historical collection. Many of the photos are unlabelled so we decided to take the albums to each reunion in the hope that attendees might be able to identify people and events. We look forward to your participation.

At the AGM today, the committee will present a motion to close the Trust Fund and donate the funds to Jane McGrath Foundation in memory of the many St George Graduates who have been afflicted with breast cancer. We are grateful to the many donors to the original fund who have willingly agreed to the proposed change of direction.

My personal thanks to the committee who have assisted with the organization of the reunion, and to Judith and Jan for hosting committee meetings in their homes.

I wish you all a happy reunion and look forward to seeing you at the reunion.

Barbara Dickin (Walters 59–63)

Reunion Report

The reunion attended by 180 graduates was a great success. The move back to the St George Leagues Club was very popular with all present. A memorabilia display was set up and a 'continuous loop' audio visual of the Hospital history was run throughout the day.

The special guest was Eileen Wilkinson (Nugent 1927–1931) who turned 100 in March and she was able to cut the special Birthday cake that had been made to celebrate the 100 years of nursing at St George. Flowers were presented to Eileen and also to Dot Coker in recognition of Dot's very long service with the committee. Mary Telford (Billing 1954) was also visiting from her home in Reno Nevada, USA and we were also pleased to have former Directors of Nursing, Norma Shore and Rosemary Snodgrass with us. There were many first timers and many who had travelled long distances, it was so good to see so many and the committee hopes that the renewed momentum will be sustained.

The special table decorations of flowers and balloons were donated by Susan Leahy and were much appreciated by all attending and several lucky people got to take them home at the end of the day.

The discussion at the AGM on the day made it clear that there was overwhelming support in keeping the Association viable and a new committee was able to be formed. Please see the list of committee members and contact details on page 7.

Judith Cornell (Roberts 1961)



Celebrating St George Hospital's centenary: (from left) Joan Wagstaff, Dorothy Coker, Eileen Wilkinson and Sheila Carter

News and Greetings

BIRTHS

Maureen Neems (Flemming 1973) is the proud grandmother of Joshua Yuki born to her son Jason

GREETINGS

Mary Telford (Billings 1954) sends her greetings from the USA and wishes all a successful and happy reunion with special wishes to her 1954 friends.

Mary Evans (Barnes 1962) sends best wishes to all as she will be holidaying in Tasmania at the time of the reunion.

Patricia Sargent (Byrne) sends apologies and greetings

Elizabeth Williams (Salway 1956) sends apologies and greetings to all.

Marie Johnstone (McIntyre 1942) sends greetings to all and tells us that she and her husband celebrate 60 years of marriage this year. She wonders where the years have gone!

Kae Crawford (1963) sends her apologies and greetings to all.

Beryl Watson (Schubert 1952) writes that she miss being at the reunion this year and wishes all a great time.

Gloria Phillips (James 1957) sends her apologies as she will be away on holidays this year and sends greetings to all.

Nikki Positti (1980) is sorry she is unable to attend and wishes everyone a very happy day.

Sylvia Bennett (Smith 1974) writes from the UK...Greetings again from England – we think our last year here. This year has not gone as planned and we have both received care from the local health service. Terry had a heart attack and required a stent. His recovery has been slow but the rehab program encouraging. I had a benign lesion removed from my neck. Consequently trips in our campervan have been shorter, to familiar places and combined with visits to family and friends. Highlights have included

attending the Graduation in Medicine of Helen Daws' (West) youngest daughter. Margot and Ian McLeod visited us and we were guests at their youngest daughter's wedding. I also had a visit to Buckingham Palace.

Best Wishes for a happy reunion and the year ahead.

Narelle Standen (Russell 1963) writes... how sorry she is not to be able to join with the rest of her PTS friends who will be celebrating 50 years since commencing training in 1959 and how pleased she was to hear from Helen Leslie (Merritt) who has worked hard to find many of the folk she had lost touch with. Helen has never been back to St George or to a reunion until this year so Narelle is particularly disappointed not to be able to attend. Narelle also tells of the wedding of her younger son, Anthony in June of this year.

Roma Williamson (Cambage 1951) sends best wishes to all.

Gwen Stokeld 1961 sends her good wishes to all and hopes that it is a happy and successful day for all.

Noeline Wilkinson (Toohey 1958) sends her best wishes to all for a happy day. She also writes that both her knees have now been successfully replaced. Noeline completed midwifery at St George 50 years ago with a great team and like many of us wonders where the years have gone.

Eileen Burgin (Dunn 1954) writes that she is really sorry to be missing this year's reunion and hopes that it will not be the last. Unfortunately the Leeton Nurses reunion has fallen on the same day and as it will be the 50th and the last she feels that it is important to attend. The trip to Wagga and Leeton will also allow Eileen to visit an elderly neighbour of her Mothers who is now in frail health. She sends her fond regards to all and best wishes for a very successful day.

Pam Clarke (Sheppard 1962) sends her greetings and writes that she and

her husband are just about to set off on an 8500 Km journey to the red centre, joining the rest of the grey nomads!

Fay Loom (Walker 1964) advises that they are just back after 3 weeks in Queensland and she sends her apologies and greetings to all friends as she is unable to attend due to a wedding on Reunion day.

Robyn Tyrrell (Gannon 1972) wrote that as she wrote the cheque for the reunion it was 40 years since she had commenced training in the PTS of September '69 and that she continues to work as an RN and Midwife.

Norma Reid (Andrews 1964) sends her apologies and greetings.

Di Mannion (Ryan 1978) Di's sister Jo writes that Di will not be able to make the reunion this year. She's still happily working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, wearing her designer abayah, identifying Muslim nurses by their footwear (can't see their faces), travelling to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and trying to drown herself in the Dead Sea. She may be home at Christmas time but is still unsure. Best wishes to all from Di.

Janice Myatt (Bakker 1978) sends greetings to all. She advises she has had a broken hand.

Beryl Judd (Mackenzie 1967) sends both her apology and greetings and best wishes to all. Life in Dorrigo continues to be wonderful. Our latest venture is into seed raising and the markets in Bellingen which keeps us busy!

Anne Lightfoot (Glover 1965) is unable to attend but wishes everyone a very happy reunion

Ieva Gay (Grigulis 1965) is sorry to be missing the reunion but will be in Tasmania on holidays. She hopes everybody has a great day.

Joyce Day (Haslam 1944) regrets that she is not well enough to attend but sends greetings to all.

Quiet Achievers

This section of the newsletter has been added to honour some of the quiet achievers that have been brought to my attention. If you have news of yourself or others please forward to the reunion secretary for inclusion in next years newsletter.

The St G & S'land Shire Leader of July 4th 2009 carried a story headed 'The Quiet Achievers' which advised of the release by Kogarah Council of the book *Kogarah's Volunteer Heroes*. The book is available at Kogarah Library. One of the people included is the late **Elaine McGuire** and the following précis is reproduced from the Leader for the interest of members

Ms McGuire, who died in 2007, went from being a junior nurse scrubbing floors to Matron of St George Hospital, where she commissioned a 250 – bed ward and services block during her 36 year career. After working with Australian Volunteers Abroad in Papua New Guinea and Thailand in the 1970's, Ms McGuire returned to Kogarah to provide voluntary respite care for the parents of disabled children.

Maureen Cassar (Rose 1970)

At last year's reunion memorabilia display there were many unidentified items on display including a picture of Maureen taken with Miss Maguire and Betty Archdale. Maureen wrote to ask if the record could be corrected and she reminded us that the photo was taken because she was the Gold Medallist of her year and was also the recipient of the AM Kellett award which the NSW Nurses Registration Board awarded to the nurse with the highest marks in the state finals. She was also able to provide copies of other material relating to her training. As a result I wrote to Maureen and asked if she would provide a short piece for this newsletter telling of her career since graduation and the following is her response:

Thank you for your recent letter. I married in 1971 and did some nursing at Canberra Hospital and also at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane where we moved to in 1972. I had 2 children in short succession – 14 months apart! I thought I would have to row to the Mater for my son's birth, as we had a huge flood in 1975 in Brisbane with cane toads everywhere. We then moved back to Canberra in 1975 and have been here ever since. Simone now works at Channel 9 in editing and Marcus, who lives in Portland Oregon, makes artificial limbs for people. My husband is a Consultant Physician and I am the practice manager for him. I didn't go back to active nursing, but it is nice to have patient contact all the same. We run a pain clinic and employ an acupuncturist, exercise physiologist and 2 secretaries. Injuries are treated and undergo Rehab in the gym. It's rewarding work. I have been involved with Children's Medical Research Foundation since 1978 (the Genes for Genes people) – we have a major luncheon once a year for 500 to 750 people. We raise 70,000.00 a year. Last year we held it at the Lodge. My hobbies include crosswords, reading, walking around the suburb. I have a budgie called Houdini, who talks the leg off an iron pot and two spoilt dogs – a pug called Bruno and a Scottie called Heather. That's about it!

Joan Short (McMahon 1963)

deserves a place in this section of the newsletter as she writes... I've just completed my sixth assignment in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia with Interserve. My role during

2007-9 included the preparation, printing and distribution of a Mental Health Manual entitled "Practical Guide to Mental Health Problems" The manual covers 30 common problems in Kyrgyzstan and is designed for nurses, doctors and community health workers as well as families with mental health sufferers. Our teaching involved students from Universities as well as village workers. Struggling with social and economic depression, the country has very little health resources.

The teaching and work ethics of all health workers is poor and has no credibility on the global scene. People suffer abuse and neglect in all areas of health. However, the role of retraining nurses and doctors has been well received and has given rise to many initiatives for 'people to own their own health' particularly in the areas of community based prevention of poor health. It has been a great privilege to work with the Kyrgyz people and I have enjoyed many wonderful friendships and experiences in a very beautiful, though poor country.

Betty Tierney (1947)

I recently came across the story of the Bush Church Aid Society Stout Hearts for Steep Hills: *Nursing in the Outback* written by Joy Brann AM and to my delight found a photograph and the history of Betty's time at the Ceduna centre. Joy graciously allowed me to reprint the following material from the book.

Betty completed general nursing training 1946 at St George's (sic) Hospital, Kogarah, NSW and

Midwifery training at Crown Street Women's Hospital, Surry Hills, NSW. Prior to undertaking her nursing training, Betty studied Dressmaking. On completion of her Midwifery Training, Betty responded to a call for nursing staff for the Bush Church Aid Society through her involvement with the Australian Nurses Christian Movement. In responding to this urgent appeal Betty offered to serve in a remote centre for a relief period of three months. Sixteen years later she finally resigned from the Society in 1964. After resigning from Ceduna she returned to NSW and worked as a Trained Nurse at her Training School and held the position as Deputy Matron. Later she took up a position with The Chesalon Nursing Homes (Anglican Church) at Jannali from whence she retired in 1985.

History of the Doll Collection

Located in the Museum Level 1, Library of the Education Block in South Street, Kogarah.

Attendees at last year's reunion will recall that the dolls were on display. The following information was prepared when the St George Hospital Librarian, who looks after the historical collection, asked if I could provide him with some history in support of the dolls that are on display. They are much admired by visitors to the collection and he had been unable to provide any background. The following history is a compilation of personal memory and information supplied by others and I would be very pleased to hear from anybody who is able to add to the history.

The dolls were made by Miss **Ethel Warner** who was a Registered Nurse on the staff of the hospital for a number of years during the 1970s and early eighties. Sister Warner worked in the Casualty and Outpatients Departments as well as in the Nurses' Home until her retirement

from nursing. Sister Warner, who came from Quirindi, trained at the Royal Newcastle Hospital, however very little else is known of her nursing career.

Miss Norma Shore the Director of Nursing between 1974 and 1984 arranged for a celebration of Nurse Education to be held in 1979 marking 70 years of the 4 year nurse training program. Nurse Education was undergoing considerable change, the 1000 hour curriculum had been implemented and the discussions regarding the transfer of nurse education were already well advanced. There were numerous events during a weeklong celebration which included a garden party at Primrose House and a nursing conference. Replica uniforms were made and modelled by staff members of the day and it was during the research for these events that the dolls were purchased and dressed by Ethel Warner. At the same time, and in celebration of nursing, space was made available on Level 2 of the Nurses Home and a museum of nursing was established. The dolls, part of the museum collection, were originally located in the foyer entrance to the James Laws House Nurses Home where they remained for many years until they were deemed to be an unsuitable display for a building that was used for multidisciplinary administrative purposes.

The museum space in James Laws House was resumed by hospital administration and the collection, including the dolls, were packed and stored temporarily in the demountable buildings at the rear of the A.C. Thomas Lecture Theatre where they remained, largely forgotten until the exhibition space in the hospital library was made available in the Research and Education Building during 2004.

*Compiled by:
Judith Cornell AM
(nee Roberts 1961)*

The following was sent in by

Enid Whyte (Cambage) who sat for the 1950 Final Exams and will have resonance for many of us who have memories of the period surrounding the finals.

Finalitis: A Diagnosis & treatment

The complaint is contracted by male or female and the latent period for infection (technically known as Probation) is 4–6 years. The longer the incubation, the worse the disease! Some weeks before the crisis, symptoms occur. First comes the bookworm reaction with blurred vision, mental paralysis and the periodic descent of the heart into the boots. An anxious expression and excessive swotting is noted throughout. The crisis is reached with sinking of the heart, dryness of mouth, intermittent tachycardia and loss of weight plus the sum of 2 Pounds to the Government!

Admission

Patient is admitted quickly into a hard cold desk, fresh air eliminated and given copious amounts of ink as required as well as blotting paper to deal with sweat and tears.

Environment

Sombre classroom surrounded by severe looking physicians and nutrition posters.

Specific Treatment

1. Tutor Sisters in strictly regulated doses for the first fortnight, increasing the dose when approaching the crisis
2. Swat books – initial dosage 14 hours a day gradually tapering off to 8 in the convalescent stage

Rest & Sleep

1. Airings supplied by the hospital Board to prevent bedsores
2. For persistent insomnia close perusal of the *Materia Medica* text book will produce prolonged yawning followed by deep slumber
3. Nightmares to be relieved by "normal nutrition"

Chart

1. Record all test results – show to yourself only!
2. Record all specific reactions to lecturers.

Farewell Eileen Wilkinson (Nugent 1934)



Eileen Johnston
Wilkinson
4.3.1909 – 3.10.2009
A good name is more
to be desired than great
riches, and loving favour
rather than silver and
gold. (Proverbs 22:1)

Members will be saddened to know that Eileen Wilkinson passed away peacefully at Prince of Wales Hospital on the 3 October aged 100 years.

At the time of her birthday in March, 'The Torch' published a précis of her life story under the banner of *Eileen grateful for a truly rewarding life* and I am sure that those who spoke with her at last year's reunion will remember how proud she was of both her nursing life and her family. In the interview she said "I have never been anything else but poor in the monetary sense, but always the richest in the philosophy of life, for which I am eternally grateful. Don't ask me why the answer is in the wind".

Eileen was so proud of her three daughters, nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren and our thoughts go to all of them and especially to Elizabeth Morris (Wilkinson 1969) who like her Mother is also a St George graduate.

Valé

We have been notified of the following deaths through the year and offer our condolences.

Valentine Litchfield

Husband of Kathryn (West) 20.11.2008

Donald Hubbard

Husband of Jan (Knight) 18.2.2009

Jackie Hart (Begg 1969)

Lost her courageous fight with spinal cancer in May 2009

Bill Standen

husband of Narelle (Russell 1963)

Wynne Jumikis (Gilbert 1953) has advised of the death last year of Dr Reg Bowman who was an RMO at St George in the 1950's and later worked at Crown Street Women's Hospital.

Can you help please?

We have had mail returned from:

Beverley Anne Joyce, Sylvania 1986

Does anybody have a contact number or address for either:

Janet McFarlane (Royce 1966) or Penny Elliott 1976. Both ladies attended the 2008 reunion but unfortunately their details were not recorded.

Do You Remember... Chris Jupp & his friends from the Blakehurst Area?

As a result of the Daily Telegraph RSVP reminder re the reunion, the reunion secretary received a call from Chris Jupp seeking information about a group of nurses, many from country NSW, who Chris and his friends befriended during the years 1965–1970. Chris, his friends and many student nurses as a group, enjoyed social and sporting outings and the company of each other.

Chris, now happily married with a family, lives in the Penrith area, remembers those days with great fondness and would like to pass on his greetings to any who remember him. If you would like to contact Chris, he can be reached on his mobile 0418 626 419.

Do you have any suggestions that you wish the committee to consider for future reunions of for the newsletter format? If so please contact any of the committee. As an example, the date for the reunion next year has been pushed back a week in an effort to move it away from the end of school holidays when many are on grandparent duty and when there is very little in the way of cut price airfares!

Please help keep our mailing lists up to date by advising change of contact details! Remember that in an effort to keep mailing cost down we only keep you on the active list for two years unless we hear from you!

Electronic Newsletter?

Do you want to get your newsletter electronically?

I have been asked by a couple of people if they could receive their mail/newsletters electronically so if you would like to add your name to the electronic list, please advise Judith Cornell at judith@netspace.net.au

Books for Sale

Stout Hearts for Steep Hills

Copies of Stout Hearts for Steep Hills: Nursing in the Outback may be obtained from the author Joy Brann AM by contacting her at maurjoy@inet.net.au or by writing to the publisher

Two Fish Drowning Publishers, PO Box 1325, Geraldton WA 6530
(08) 9926 1375.

The cost is \$35.00 + postage and all profits from the sales go to the Bush Church Aid Society to support their ministry.

The Healing Saint

From time to time the committee receives requests for copies of the History of St George and since we do not have copies, the official order form is reproduced for your convenience.

The Healing Saint: A 100 Year History of the St George Hospital

The 1890s found the civic fathers of the three local councils of the time, seriously concerned about the hygiene, health and medical aspects of their constituents. The situation came to a head when two railway workers critically injured at Rockdale had to be transported by horse and buggy to the closest hospital, Royal Prince Alfred. One victim died on the trip and the other survived for a few short hours only. An appeal went out to St George residents to raise funds to establish a local infirmary of sufficient capacity so as to provide some semblance of a chance to hang on to life.

And so this wonderful history proceeds from Chapter One: The Beginning 1892 to November 1894 to Chapter Twelve: The "The" that makes the St George Great until the conclusion – 1994: Looking to the Future.

Copies are available for purchase from St George Hospital – for further information please phone Community Relations on 9350 2686 or complete the order form below.

PLEASE CUT ALONG LINE

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Hardcover copies @ \$39.95 (plus \$3 postage) of The Healing Saint

_____ Softcover copies @ \$24.95 (plus \$3 postage) of The Healing Saint

Please find enclosed my cheque, made payable to St George Hospital, or

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa

Signature: _____ Cardholder's Name: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiry: _____

Send your completed order with payment to:

Community Relations Department

St George Hospital, Gray Street, Kogarah NSW 2217

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2008/2009

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NEWSLETTER '09

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