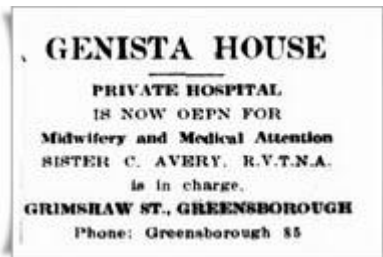# From a house to a community institution ...
The Diamond Valley Community Hospital

Society member and descendant of the district's early pioneers, Faye Fort (nee Partington) has many stories to tell. In this article, Faye recalls some of those stories about the early days of the Diamond Valley Community Hospital. The hospital was always an important institution in the community until its demise in 2000.
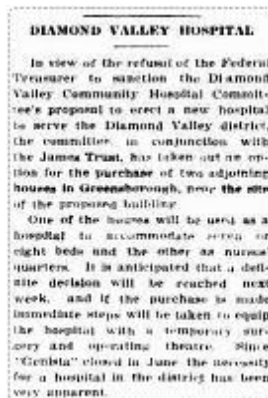
In the 1930's the only hospital in the Diamond Valley area was a small hospital with seven beds, this was in a house at 23 Grimshaw Street, Greensborough. This house was built in 1924, by Mr. Rouch, for Fred Butterworth, who ran a boarding house there until 1934.

Note the spelling mistake which ran in every edition over many months.
Hurstbridge Advertiser 9th March 1934

The first hospital opened in May 1934, it was used for both midwifery and general medical procedures, it was run by Sister C. W. Avery and one assistant and was named "Genista House" because it was covered with a genista bushes.

In 1940 there was talk of closing the hospital down, but a decision was made to do it all up and it remained open until 1942. The Butterworth family again ran it as a boarding house; it was sold in the 1950's to Dr. E.P. (Ted) Cordner and dentist Ian Hansen who used it as a medical centre. This centre is still in use today.

The community was not happy!

Eltham and Whittlesea Advertiser
5th September 1941

Next door, set back on the block was another house, built by Mr. Rouch in 1914, for Louis Amiet, headmaster at the primary school, who lived there until 1925, then the house was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Laughlin (cost 750 pounds), they sold the house in 1941 and it became the hospital. Alterations were made over the next few months and two extra bungalows were built at the rear for staff accommodation, the nine bed hospital is now registered with a labour ward and nursery. In 1942 a garden party, on the lawns, was held for the opening with two hundred people attending.

NURSES.—2 D.C. Sisters required by Diamond Valley Hospital, 13 miles by electric train from city, excellent conditions and first-class accom., £26 bonus paid after 6 months' service. Apply Matron, tel. Greensborough 236.

The Argus
24th November 1948

During that year a small room was built, just outside the front door, to be used as an operating theatre, it almost seems incredible to imagine doctors operating in such a small area with patients being carried manually in and out of the theatre, because it was too small for a stretcher to go around corners. Boiling water was carried in kettles from the kitchen.

Many items in the minutes seem trivial by today's standards, problems regarding the milking of the cow, separating the milk, collecting the eggs and stoking the boilers on Sundays. Trevor Partington used to milk the hospitals cow, a huge cow, morning and night before and after school, matron would often be out there helping him.

This hospital was pulled down in 1950 to make way for the new Diamond Valley Community Hospital, with facilities to cater for forty beds. It opened with sixteen beds. The first operation was performed in 1954 by surgeon Mr. Ian McDonald a gynaecologist, assisted by Dr. Don Cordner and the theatre nurse was Matron Rita Glenn.

In 1955 there was a well attended garden party, where the President Mr. George Upton welcomed Sir Dallas and Lady Brooks to declare the opening of the new hospital. In 1954 the hospital had welcomed many new mothers and 106 sets of twins were born. Over the years with the population growing, there was a need for the hospital to be extended. With help from the government, Sir Henry Bolte, made arrangements for an interest free loan of 20,000 pounds ($40,000) for two years, then he declared, 10,000 pound ($20,000) of that was to be a gift from the government.

This hospital was in use from 1954 until it was closed in late 2000.

It was a wonderful hospital, where most of the local kids were born, but sadly it is now closed.

Some of the staff over those years were:

- Miss Rita Glenn – (Matron 1954/71)
- Miss Marjorie Burke – (Deputy Matron 1954/71)
- Mrs Marjorie Stephens (1943/71)

- Miss Ruth Bassett (1947/52 and 1954/71)
- Miss Jean Kittely (1942/45)
- Miss Mary Heenan (1946/7)
- Miss Winifred Leuschner (1948)
- Mrs Marjorie McKenzie (1950)
- Miss Jean Digby (1949)
- Miss Lucia Williams (1951/3)

Faye Fort (nee Partington)
2011