

NOTES ON "THE BENDIGO GOLD DISTRICT HOSPITAL"

A Hospital first mooted 1853

First site chosen "Hospital Hill" ( between Rowan St and Mackenzie St and behind the present Lister House School of Nursing)

1853. First building - a primitive affair of slab and w/board daubed with clay somewhere near the middle of the present Short St - which at that time extended from the High St to the brow of the hill behind the Sacred Heart Cathedral site. Later on Short St was extended to Rowan St, cutting right across the old site of this first hospital.

New building greatly needed to serve the hundreds of diggers then active on the field. Messrs Vahland & Gezechmann, Architects, designed a new building of stone and brick ( the present centre portion of the hospital) to hold 100 beds. This centre portion cost £12,000 ( \$24,000) and was erected in three months ! Patients were transferred from the old site on Hospital Hill to the new building in December 1858.

( It is interesting to consider the reason for building the new hospital so far to the North of the town. Probably, Mr Larritt the Surveyor at the time decided to avoid all contact with the lines of reef and all mining activities where feverish activity was taking place . He had a fight with the Govt. authorities when he reserved two big areas for the hospital and the 'Benevolent Home' ( approx. 10 acres ea ?) but in the end, he had his way and thus avoided all disturbances which may have been detrimental to both institutions. If one looks at a map of the gold bearing 'reefs' of Bendigo, his reasons become quite clear, for the reefs end before the gentle slope towards Epsom and the lower reaches of the Bendigo Creek)

TWO WINGS were added to the first building in 1864 - six years later. They form the North and South wings as at present.

FIRST MATRON appointed in 1865

The Bowen Wing ' for females' added, with the very attractive connecting walk-way in 1873. ( The foundation stone -still to be seen on an inner wall records the fact that Lady Diamantina Bowen , wife of the Gov. (?) of that time, performed the ceremony. ) Up till this time, Bendigo was a town full of young men - and accidents were terribly common in all the mines . Women were not the first consideration in those early days, but the new detached wind of two floors and a basement, corrected the balance and still forms an integral part of the hospital complex.)

A BOILER HOUSE to provide hot water built in 1874. ( Until quite recent times, wood provided the cheapest fuel in the district. Old photos show dozens of wood carters and their drays full of logs on the annual "Wood Day" for the hospital.

The hospital was always in full use. ( The Bendigo district population is recorded at 28,928 in 1858. The number in Bendigo itself - not including the separate districts of 'Ironbark' or 'Long Gully' ( ! ) is recorded as 12,159 ) So there was need for the hospital indeed.

Old 'Bendigo Advertisers' of those times record shocking fatalities with monotonous regularity and cold-blooded descriptions of the poor victims - but that was the form of reporting in those days.

Acute shortage of clean water, floods, and the ever present 'sludge problem - or mud - from the workings causes outbreaks of typhoid and other infectious diseases and patients were put in tents in the spacious hosp. grounds - although cross-infection was not then detected to the same extent as now-a-days.

The iron front fence was added in 1895

First Nurses' home in 1898



First Nurses' home in 1898

The Northern corner of the block was segregated for an Infectious Block in 1916 - and this primitive wooden portion of iron and weather boards continued in use until quite recent times. Nurses hated the isolation wards - and so did the poor patients suffering from Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria herded close together in the over crowded quarters of 'Watson' as it was called (after J.B. Watson and generous benefactor to the hospital) At one stage, the whole hospital was quarantined for some some days - in the early 1920's - and no person was allowed to either enter or leave the premises for about a week. This was at the height of a Diphtheria epidemic - only too prevalent until the now common preventive vaccine was discovered, and sewerage was introduced.

## THE BENDIGO GOLD DISTRICT HOSPITAL (2)

The first Lift was installed in the Home Wing in 1906.

In 1927, the old romantic name 'Gold District Hospital' was changed to the Bendigo & Northern District BONE HOSPITAL, to conform to the new and wider usefulness of the growing institution in the northern part of the State.

The Lunsell Family donated the cost for the X-Ray Laboratory in the 1930's and because Bendigo had become the focus for dreaded 'Silicosis' or the old name 'Miner's Complaint' the new Laboratory became invaluable in the detection and treatment of the trouble, until then so prevalent.

( In the early days of quartz mining, dust from the drilling process was inhaled because no regulations were in force for adequate ventilation in the deep underground workings.) This caused acute irritation in the lungs and tuberculosis as we know it, was rife - and being infectious, was a constant danger to the whole community. ( The story of how this was overcome is a long one and needs a separate paper to do it justice)

A private wing called 'KUMALA' was erected in 1935 - on what has become one of the noisiest corners in Bendigo! The odd angle of this building has caused countless headaches in these latter years, and only recently the whole Northern side of the hospital block has been unified into one big complex housing all the auxiliary services such as X-Ray, Pharmacy, Biological Lab and many other essential services which go to make up modern hospital treatment - both preventive and curative.

( For modern statistics and bed-numbers I would suggest that the latest B & N D B.N. Annual Report be obtained - 1970 or 1971. This will show the growth of the Institution over the years from the very small beginning on 'Hospital Hill' in 1853. The Hospital is now a big 'industry' in the City and perhaps could be listed 3rd (?) after the Ordnance and Railways ? )

Add. 1

STEAM is now generated at the huge new boiler house situated at the Home and Hospital for the Aged, one block away from the Hospital. This plant serves the central laundry, the Home and the Hospital more efficiently - although perhaps not more economically than the old wood fueled boilers ever did. A pipe line runs through a tunnel under Kersey Street houses to the Hospital and provides all those efficient sterilization processes, heating and countless other uses for which steam is employed in modern techniques.

Add. 11

The fine turret clock was installed in the tower on Dec 8th. 1866 It was made by Joseph & Co, who had a shop in Pall Mall next to the present National Bank and on the corner of the original Bendigo Arcade. The works are still in good order, but neglect of the fabric of the tower has caused propinquity to be suspended. It is hoped to restore this before long.