

150 years of service to the community of Ballarat

THE HISTORY OF THE BALLARAT BASE HOSPITAL



A sketch of the Ladies Wing built in 1858. It was named the Ladies Wing in tribute to fair fundraisers, however female patients were still housed in the tiny north wing.



Ballarat District Hospital, in the 1890's with Porter's Lodge (left foreground), added in 1872. Its handsome appearance belied its inner state, for the Depression of those years brought many problems, both financial and managerial.

The Ballarat Hospital officially opened its doors on September 3rd 1856. Prior to this, in Ballarat's earliest days, those in need of serious medical attention were attended to at the Government Camp.

However, treatment was not always to the desired level, official correspondence in 1854 highlighted the scarce resources to tend the sick and injured. The wounded from the Eureka Stockade could not be provided with proper accommodation at the Camp and so steps were taken to build a hospital.

The movement was started by A.L. Lynn, Henry Foster, the Superintendent of Police, W.B. Rodier, James Daly the Warden, R. Lewis and others. A meeting was held to consider the matter of erecting a miner's hospital.

When the building was begun, the site on the corner of Sturt and Drummond Streets was 'in the bush' and some people lost their way returning from the hospital site.

The foundation stone of the original building was laid on Christmas Day 1855, by James Daly the police magistrate and warden.

The architect was Mr. J. Robertson. The hospital contained forty-two beds and each day a paid collector went out in search of funds.

In early times accommodation at the new hospital must have been at a premium because an electric telegraph to the Chief Commissioner in Melbourne was sent requesting the use of two rooms in Military Barracks until the new hospital wing was completed.

The hospital relied on government grants and subscriptions from more fortunate people to enable the hospital to meet the demands required by the people of Ballarat and surrounding districts. In 1858 nearly two thousand three hundred pounds was collected for the hospital of which about 10 per cent was donated by the Chinese, entitling them to a special Chinese Ward in return.

In 1869 hospital records show there were 1033 patients admitted and 5372 outpatients treated. In addition to being a resident surgeon from 1856 to 1859 and Honorary Surgeon 1859 to 1874, Thomas Hillas performed Australia's first Caesarean operation at the hospital in 1872.

A nurse training school opened in 1888 and female nursing was introduced throughout the hospital, with the exception of the male accident ward where male ward clerks continued to provide care.

The Queen Victoria Women's Ward, funded substantially by local women's efforts, was opened housing the medical and surgical wards for women. This facility now houses BHS Psychiatric Services, although it has been substantially remodelled since its opening.

The Operating theatre was relocated to the Queen Victoria block in 1918 and although electricity had been installed, replacing gas lamps in the wards, the majority of surgical cases were completed using natural light.

The administration block situated on the corner of Sturt and Drummond Street was constructed in 1926 as a single story building.

The second storey providing the façade we see today was added almost a decade later. This building currently houses the dental clinic operated by Dental Health Services Victoria. The Edward Wilson and Eildon House block were constructed in 1935 providing new surgical, maternity and children's facilities as well as private patient facilities.

In 1953 Yuille house, named after the first settler to Ballarat, was opened to care for TB cases and infectious diseases. It now houses the administration areas of BHS. When the Nurses Accommodation opened in 1951 it changed the Ballarat skyline with its seven stories becoming the highest building in Ballarat.

It has now been replaced by the West Wing of the Bolte Building which houses Emergency, Intensive and Coronary Care Units together with outpatient's clinics.

Sloss House (named after Dr. W.A. Sloss staff surgeon and hospital member for 50 years) was built in the late 1950's between Edward Wilson Building and Eildon House on one side and Yuille House on the other to link the individual buildings and included the Hospital's reception, admissions, casualty, several operating theatres and recovery.

In 2006 Eildon House was renovated to provide private consulting suites and medical procedure rooms for specialists in gastroenterology, general medicine and gynaecology and a range of diagnostic services. Interestingly, Eildon House operated as a private hospital shortly after it was opened in 1935.

In 1976 a large general-purpose block was constructed providing the hospital with a cafeteria, sundry function rooms, and a library. The library was named in honour of Mr W R Griffiths and opened by him in 1977.

The radiology department has been at the forefront of technological innovation for many years.

In 1988 a CT unit was established in the radiology department. A major upgrade of the radiology department in 1996 included the installation of a helical CT scanner, and in 1999 a Magnetic Resonance Imaging Unit.

In 2005 the hospital became the first in Australia to install a 64-slice CT scanner.

Many staff from Ballarat Hospital served their country during both World War I and World War II.

Of the 54 nurses who offered their services during WWI, seven nurses were awarded the Royal Red Cross.

Thirty nurses enlisted during World War II, including Miss

J. M. Langham who was a matron for twenty years from 1947. She received the Royal Red Cross for her services during WWII and was also awarded an OBE in 1969 for her services to nursing.

In 1986 nurse training was transferred from the hospital to Ballarat College of Advanced Education with the last group of students graduating in 1988. That year marked the centenary and the end of the Ballarat Base Hospital Nurse Training School.

The hospital has continued to provide placements for college students and courses for trained nurses. In 1999 a new Education Resource Centre was completed including a 120-seat lecture theatre, two seminar rooms, boardroom, meeting rooms and offices.

The Henry Bolte building was officially opened in 1994 providing a new ward and operating theatre block located on the corner of Mair and Drummond Streets.

The building won an award of merit for outstanding architecture by the Victorian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

In 1996 a thirty-eight bed psychiatric unit together with facilities for community based staff was established in the Queen Victoria building and officially opened in 1997.

Over the past 150 years the hospital has continued to grow and develop to meet the needs of an expanding population through service expansion as well as acquiring new buildings, facilities and equipment.

This has occurred despite some difficult financial times, particularly in the early days when management struggled to make ends meet. The hospital achieved regional base status in 1927 following upgrades to the facilities and the inclusion of both maternity and children's wards.

Many of the facilities and buildings were named in recognition of individual efforts and services to the hospital and the community, including the hospital library which is named after Dr. W. R. Griffiths, medical superintendent in 1924 and 1925 who served the hospital for more than 45 years.

Possibly the most important development for the hospital in recent times was the agreed amalgamation of the Ballarat Base Hospital with the Queen Elizabeth Centre and Grampians Psychiatric Services to be known as Ballarat Health Services. This took effect on 1st January 1997.

The Quality of Care report team would like to acknowledge the assistance and information collated by Peter Butters, Hon. Secretary, Ballarat Historical Society and Hedley Peach, in preparing this snapshot of the history of Ballarat Base Hospital.



The Queen Victoria Womens Ward, c. 1900. This building was substantially funded by women's efforts was especially destined for women's use. The two new wards, Surgical and Medical, ended years of overcrowding for female patients. This building is still in use, but has been greatly altered, both within and without, and now houses general medical cases.

FAST FACTS

In the 2005/2006 financial year, 73,638 community patient consultations were undertaken in the region with 12,500 admissions. This represents a significant increase in client numbers from previous years.