

# STAWELL REGIONAL HEALTH

Celebrating 150 Years of Service  
to our community

1859 - 2009



## Mayor's message



Kevin Erwin - Mayor Northern Grampians Shire.

Congratulations from the Northern Grampians Shire I would like to add my congratulations to Stawell Regional Health on their 150th Anniversary.

From those humble beginnings of the first hospital at Doctor's Hill, opening its doors on February 26, 1859 at a cost of 301 pounds, to a more permanent site at Stawell West, opening on June 21, 1861 at a cost of 3,405 pounds, to its current site on St George Sands in Sloane Street, opening its doors on January 20th 1934. Stawell Regional Health has served the residents of Stawell and District with the highest level of health care.

Many people along that journey have dedicated much of their time to ensure that the level of care and the best possible facilities have been provided to the people of Stawell and surrounds.

I would also like to congratulate and thank

those very dedicated people.

Today's modern health precinct is a tribute to Stawell and District people and their willingness to add their support in many ways over the years.

The nurses, the staff, the doctors and the board must also be congratulated for their dedicated contribution to the well-being of its patients and the people of Stawell.

Stawell Regional Health is to be commended and congratulated on continuing the proud tradition of excellence in health provision to the Stawell community and on its 150th Anniversary, due to a vision and distinguished contribution in recent years, it is one of the best hospitals in regional Victoria.

**Kevin Erwin**  
Mayor  
Northern Grampians Shire

## President's Message



Karen Douglas - President Stawell Regional Health.

According to C E Sayers in Shepherd's Gold - The Story of Stawell, 'The hospital is Stawell's oldest continuing institution, with a tradition of sincere service, on whose committee of management a legion of citizens has served.'

The hospital has now served the community and surrounding areas of Stawell for 150 years.

From its very beginning in a canvas building on Doctor's Hill through its grander presence at Pleasant Creek and continuing even now on the reclaimed site on the hill in Sloane Street, the hospital has always continued to serve the needs of its community.

Not just tending to those who are unwell or injured, but also throughout this time identifying the challenges to the good health of the district and working strenuously to seek to improve the condition of the general community.

This has seen the hospital involved in seeking to improve the amenity of the gold fields, then the growing town with issues of fresh water,

lack of sanitation and the concomitant spread of disease.

Today, 150 years after the opening of the canvas building, Stawell Regional Health continues to be concerned and influence the general health of its community and the surrounding region.

No longer is typhoid, tuberculosis or "miners complaint" the major focus, but other medical conditions reflecting the age in which we exist have replaced those and are just as challenging. While we can now expect to live longer we also expect to enjoy good health and to live in safer environments.

To this end the commitment of the committee of management of the hospital remains unchanged and after 150 years upholds its dedication to the 'tradition of sincere service' to the Stawell and district community.

**Karen Douglas**  
President Stawell Regional Health

### HISTORY WRITTEN BY:

Ellen McCutcheon, Don Leach, Ron Taylor, Golden Heritage Project (1966), Gary Withers. Stawell Historical Society.  
COLLATED BY: Stawell Times News.

**COVER PICTURE:** Dr Norm Castle has been practicing medicine in Stawell since October 5, 1955. One of his first patients was district teenager Doreen (Driscoll) Cross (right). Dr Castle delivered all of Doreen and husband Eric Cross' four children the second of which was Jenny (left) in 1963, at the Stawell Hospital. Eight of Doreen's nine grandchildren have also been delivered by Dr Castle, including Jessie Antonio (second from right), who was born in 1987.

## Early days - 1858 to 1860



Alfred B Clemes

**I**t was on June 26, 1858 a public meeting about land reform and manhood suffrage was held at Cathcart on the Ararat goldfields.

The meeting was attended by people

from the Ararat Mining District and Pleasant Creek Division.

From this meeting a committee was formed to establish a hospital serving both Ararat and Pleasant Creek goldfields and to be situated at Ararat.

Many meetings were subsequently held at Pleasant Creek and Ararat to discuss the matter with most controversy centred on patients being admitted and cared for by charitable means and/or by way of a fixed

subscription to the hospital - similar to public and private patients.

On August 7, 1858 the people of the Pleasant Creek Division held a public meeting at the Olympic Theatre, Deep Lead and decided that they wanted their own hospital close to the Pleasant Creek and Deep Lead diggings.

A Provisional Committee was elected to make the hospital a reality and a collection taken up which raised about 100 pounds.

Robert H. Buchanan, one of the two vice-presidents, Alfred B. Clemes, corresponding secretary and Charles B Playford, later to be secretary/collector addressed the meeting relating what had been done and what needed to be done.

Robert Buchanan and Alfred Clemes are attributed with founding the hospital, but much credit must go to Charles Playford for his fundraising efforts.



Charles B Playford



Robert F Buchanan

### Doctor's Hill Temporary Hospital (1858-1860):

On October 13, 1858 A contract was let to construct the hospital on land secured at Doctor's Hill halfway between the Commercial Street, Pleasant Creek and the main street of the Deep Lead alluvial diggings.

It was on February 26, 1859 the temporary hospital opened its doors. It was constructed of weatherboard, iron and drill at a cost of 301 pounds, was 36 feet long and 22 feet wide with one large ward at the rear and two smaller wards at the front and the whole furnished at a cost of 130 pounds to accommodate 12 patients.

Three smaller buildings, the surgeon's quarters to the left, staff quarters to the



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# Early days

## - 1858 to 1860

right and kitchen to the rear, then in the course of construction, were to cost 63 ponds.

Patients were to be given free surgical and medical treatment and care, though paying patients would be admitted under special conditions, but were encouraged to seek treatment elsewhere.

The first wardsman and nurse/cook were Robert Hayes and his wife Mary Ann who were appointed at a combined salary of 130 pounds, a few weeks before the hospital opened.

Chas B Playford was appointed secretary/collector for wages and commission and the first male and female patients were William McLaughlan (injured spine) and Mary Brown (Purpura).

Dr Robert Colquhoun later took up the resident surgeon's position for a salary of 250 pounds.

The provisional committee presented its first report to a contributors' meeting on March 5, 1859, stating that its job had been done, the hospital had been erected as a temporary measure and to get government land and monetary grants, trustees would need to be elected.

As a result the first managing committee was put forward with H E



Later painting of the Doctor's Hill temporary hospital.

Jenkins and Robert Buchanan as vice-presidents, Charles Playford as secretary/collector and Alfred Clemes as a committee of management member, one of twelve. At this stage the committee had five pounds, 10 shillings and nine pence in hand.

On January 18, 1860 the first annual report was produced, together with rules for running the hospital.

From the opening until the end of December 1859 a total of 67 in and 27 out patients had been admitted giving the committee of management as Richard Codd, president, H G Jenkins and J E Dobson as vice-presidents.

A government grant of 1,000 pounds (with 500 pounds to follow) plus donations from the diggings, townships and pastoral stations of a little more than 1,300 pounds since August 1858, helped boost receipts to just over 2,390 pounds which after expenditures, left a surplus of 588 pounds.

Five acres of land had been granted in the government proclaimed (June 11, 1858) Stawell Township for a permanent hospital.

A fear of passing on infections led to a ban on women waiting confinement, children under five, syphilitic conditions and other known infectious disease. Persons suffering insanity were also not admitted.

Donors of at least one pound in the previous 12 months, life governors (a donation of at least 25 pounds at one time and life subscribers (10 pounds at one time, were to elect the managing committee, also known as the Board.

Patients were to be admitted on the recommendation of a voting contributor and certification by a committee member on the approved admission ticket.

Agreement had been reached with the first Ararat hospital, which opened on April 10, 1860, about collection area boundaries.

Doctor's Hill became too small and by the middle of the 1860's little was being produced on the diggings, but the Quartz Reefs around Big Hill were beginning to open up and Stawell Township (Stawell West) was being settled as the government centre.

Eventually plans for the new permanent hospital were drawn up and a tender let to Ross and Strachan for 1,949 pounds on November 9, 1860 for the main building.

In the event a grant for an additional five acres, confirmed in December 1860, saw costs come in substantially higher.



Stawell Main Street in 1867.



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In the meantime, for more information about Sandy's story, the treatment options available, and to understand common causes of knee pain visit [www.myknee.com.au](http://www.myknee.com.au)



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Pleasant Creek Hospital 1876.

## Pleasant Creek Hospital 1861-1882

On December 31, 1860 the foundation stone of the new permanent hospital was laid with full Masonic honours together with a quantity of coins, a copy of the first annual report and a number of different newspapers dated December 28, 1860.

A procession from the Reefs to Stawell West and a banquet marked the occasion.

The hospital was opened on June 21, 1861. It was built of brick and stone, had four wards to accommodate 40 patients, an operating room, committee room,

bathroom, dispensary and living and working space for the resident staff of three.

Total expenditure on building and site works was 3,405 pounds, including 570 pounds for the smaller building constructed at the rear from much of the material salvaged from Doctor's Hill and contained a kitchen, wash-house, laundry and store rooms.

The first full year of operation in 1862 saw paid staff increased to six, including the secretary/collector and resident surgeon and 207 in and 227 out patients received treatment - the most common complaints being rheumatism, eye conditions, ulcers and abscesses.

A lady was admitted for 'lunacy', the cost being paid by her husband, and this led to debate on the possible provision of fever, syphilis, lunacy and benevolent wards.

Over the next 20 years the hospital was to expand significantly with the addition of land at the front and rear, up to some 19 fenced acres and much work carried out in the gardens which were planted with ornamentals and trees.

A new ward was added to the main building in 1864, mainly for processing infectious diseases.

In the same year construction of the surgeon's residence commenced, but not completed until early 1867. Its completion gave three additional wards as both surgeon and resident staff were accommodated therein.

In 1870 a further large ward was added to the main building, the old building at the rear removed and a two storey brick building erected in its place.

In 1872 a new morgue and entrance gates were completed and external stairs added.

Another large ward was added to the smaller two storey building in 1875 giving a total accommodation for 70 patients.

To complete extensions before the benevolent asylum was inaugurated, a raised terrace with balustrade replaced the steps at the front of the main building.

From 1866 the hospital ran a continual deficit, because government grants never reached the promised levels.

Towards the end of the period donations



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## Pleasant Creek Hospital 1861-1882

fell to as low as 600 pounds due to the onset of a depression and the slowing of gold mining in the Quartz Reefs which had flourished during the mid 1860s through to the late 1870s.

Pastoral stations had been the mainstay of contributions since the opening of the hospital, with the mining community contributions amounting to only a third of total collections, a sore point with the committee which bemoaned the situation where miners received the bulk of care and treatment, but gave little in return.

In 1874 the inauguration of Hospital Sunday implemented where the different religious denominations set aside one Sunday's collection for the hospital's benefit, an institution which was to last until well after the second world war.

A growing depression in 1881 and associated smaller contributions had two effects on the hospital.

Firstly, salaries for the eight paid staff were reduced by just over 10 percent to 906 pounds and secondly, inpatient numbers were reduced to 223 from the 400 or so a year admitted during the mid to late 1870s. ■

## Stawell Hospital and Benevolent Asylum

1882 - 1900



Doctor's residence at Pleasant Creek.

**I**n 1882 Pleasant Creek was no longer used as a locality name and was replaced by Stawell, which was the title of both the Borough and Shire municipalities.

The 'Benevolent Asylum' was added because the reduced numbers of patients able to be treated and the attendant excess accommodation led the committee to offer asylum to the poor, aged or infirmed.

In the event one existing ward, capable of accommodating 12 patients was set aside for males only, with the proviso that if the arrangement proved satisfactory an additional ward for females would be 'put up' at a later date.

Inpatient numbers were further reduced to 201 and salaries to 778 pounds in 1882. Outpatient numbers were also at their lowest at slightly more than 250, down from nearly 600 in 1878.

There were, however, 16 paying patients, the highest number since patients of this type were first admitted on a limited basis in 1867.

Only about a third of patients had been born in Australia, more than half coming from the United Kingdom and Ireland and just over half were of Presbyterian and Anglican persuasion with the Catholic faith representing about one quarter.

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## Stawell Hospital and Benevolent Asylum 1882 - 1900

In 1883-84 the financial accounting year was altered by the government from a calendar year to July 1 to June 30, but the rules of the hospital which included election of the board at a subscribers annual meeting in January each year meant that a report was prepared for that meeting and a supplementary report from January 1 to June 30 also produced.

This arrangement was to continue until the 1896/97 fiscal year when the hospital was incorporated on June 11, 1897.

From 1884 the world wide depression was a dominating factor. Annual government grants were reduced to 1,200 pounds early in the period.

Further instances of the effects of the depression were the failure in 1885 of the hospital's bankers, the Oriental Bank, which saw a loss of 95 pounds on Duncan McKellar's bequest of 1,000 pounds made in 1884 and no government grant towards the building of the Jubilee Ward, completed in 1888 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

The contract of 1,365 pounds had been let

in 1887 and donations towards its construction had been received from the Stawell Borough, Shire and Dunmunkle Councils.

This ward and four semi-detached units was to house indigent and frail females and couples, complementary to the men's benevolent ward of 1882.

The Inspector of Charities on his annual visit intimated that the hospital needed alterations and changes.

The Royal Commission on Charities, whose subsequent report was to have a far reaching effect on public hospitals, visited and among other things, suggested that Stawell become solely a benevolent asylum with other patients to be transferred to Ararat and Horsham hospitals, an outcome totally rejected by the Board.

For the remainder of the period little was done to the hospital buildings apart from some minor improvements to the interior and a cover put over the rear yard between the main and smaller buildings, but as a result of the Charities Royal Commission, the depression and a move by the general nursing community a number of things happened.

The average cost per inpatient measured at

44 pounds, three shillings and five pence in 1892/93 fell to 25 pounds, 19 shillings and four pence by 1894/95, partly due to the increasing patient numbers and partly due to a stringent hold on salaries and provisioning, the latter falling substantially due to the introduction of a stricter diet regime.

In 1894/95, a move was made to set up an endowment fund with private contributions to alleviate the failings in government funding.

In 1896/97, pressure from the growing nurses' industrial muscle saw the introduction of probationer nurses who were to be trained and educated.

The Hospital was incorporated on June 11, 1897, mainly to retain more say for the board in running the institution, but also to offset the agencies of government funding and 'interference' and limit any legal action against board members.

A typhoid epidemic followed by an influenza outbreak saw inpatient numbers soar to nearly 400 in 1898/1899. In early 1900 the services of Dr William H Syme, Honorary surgeon from 1874 were lost due to illness.



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## Stawell Hospital and Benevolent Asylum 1901-1919



Syme infectious disease ward at Pleasant Creek in 1904.

The advent of Federation had little effect on the hospital, although trained nursing staff were engaged for the first time in 1901.

In the following year the hospital affiliated with the Victorian Trained Nurses Association while Chas Playford severed his connection with the hospital and was presented with an illuminated address.

New admission tickets were introduced, incorporating a declaration by the prospective patient of an inability to pay all or part of hospital costs, as was a new book-keeping (Burdekin) system which included the disclosure of endowment funds in the accounts and the classification of receipts and expenditure into various new heads and sub-heads.

During 1903/04 work began on construction of the W H Syme



## Stawell Hospital and Benevolent Asylum 1901-1919

Ward for infectious diseases, as a result of an endowment by his widow.

It was opened on November 29, 1904 by Sir John Forrest MP with accommodation for eight patients and attendant nursing staff.

The Central Board of Health approached the board about making a ward available for phthisis sufferers from the Melbourne area. While the idea was accepted by the board and a ward set aside, it was found to be unsafe, the few patients who had been taken in were discharged after a few months occupancy in 1904 and further moves in this direction dropped.

In 1906/07 the hospital affiliated with the Hospital and Charities Association formed to try to get a better deal on grants from the government. Fittingly, Alfred Clemes was elected president for the Hospital Golden Jubilee of 1908/09.

The following year diphtheria was prevalent and surgical cases were high.

At the outbreak of war Mr L C Phillips was president and the Premier of Victoria, Sir A J Peacock visited Stawell and addressed the hospital Sunday gathering on Nov. 22, 1914.

By 1915/16 an agreement was reached with three local doctors to provide medical services as the resident and honorary surgeons were caught up in the war effort.

In the early months of 1916/17 there were few benevolent patients and it was decided to transfer them to Ararat making 20 beds available to the government in case they were needed for returning war wounded or traumatised.

Consequently the 'Benevolent Asylum' was dropped from the title. At this stage there were 10 wards with accommodation for 66 patients, 256 patients were admitted averaging a 20 day stay in hospital and only 60 outpatient treated.

The secretary/collector position which was re-combined in 1910 was filled by Mr W Hastings Bell. President was Mr J Dalziel, matron was Miss M I Lang and sister was Miss C Wren. In the same year fifteen staff attracted wages and salaries of 657 pounds out of a total expenditure of 1,863 pounds, while cash in hand amounted to 1,164 pounds, the endowment fund was 790 pounds and a bequest by Mrs Mary Watson of 37 pounds and 10 shillings was placed in a special fund with interest only to be used for running costs, the first fund of this kind. Total income amounted to 2,239 pounds



Medical and nursing staff at Pleasant Creek in 1920s.

including a government grant of 553 pounds, contributions of 291 pounds, a Hospital Sunday result of 260 pounds, inpatient contributions of 346 pounds, including government payments of nearly 19 pounds for soldiers and nearly 26 pounds for old age pensioners and outpatient payments of just under 5 pounds, together with cash in hand from the previous year of 1,225 pounds. On the whole the hospital was in a 'healthy' position, despite the ongoing war.

In 1918/1919 the honorary surgeon's role was reinstated and verandahs added to both sides of the main building, while in 1919/1920 the resident surgeon's position was filled again, the nurses quarters and doctor's residence papered and painted and a gas plant re-installed to replace the one destroyed by fire in the previous year. ■

# N Northgate

## STAWELL GOLD MINES



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## Stawell and District Hospital (1920-1934)

Perhaps in recognition of the forthcoming new Hospitals and Charities Act of 1922, which had been in the making since the Royal Commission on Charities Report of 1890, the Board added 'and District' to better indicate the area served. The terms 'Stawell and District' and 'Stawell District' seemed to be interchangeable.

The change in title coincided with an outbreak of diphtheria which waned by 1922/23 but re-emerged in 1926 through to 1930. This outbreak, together with a rise in cases of scarlet fever reached its peak in 1928/29 when more than 500 inpatients were treated, more than 100 more than usual, placing great pressure on staff and resources.

In the nursing sphere the trainees were passing their RVNA exams at an average of two per year. Miss M.I. Lang was re-appointed matron in 1923/24 following war service in the Mediterranean.

In that same year Mr Fleetwood Smith, proprietor of the 'Stawell Times' raised 667 pounds towards a Skiagraph or X-Ray machine and the installation of electric light.

In 1927/8 the resident surgeon was replaced by medical officers which were honorary instead of salaried positions.



St George Sands site in Sloane Street.

The Country Hospitals Association, of which Stawell was to become a member, was moving to ask the government for grants on a pound for pound contributed basis.

In September 1927 the Hospital Ladies Auxiliary was formed with donations and subscriptions amounting to 117 pounds, seven shillings and five pence in the first 12 months. They held a commercial travellers gala day on December 1, 1927 which raised 169 pounds and one shilling after costs.

On May 8, 1928 a special meeting of subscribers and life governors was held to discuss the recommendations by the Charities Board for a new hospital and action later taken through a newly constituted Hospital Committee for a Hospital Building Fund, which allocated fund-raising quotas to various organisations within Stawell and the surrounding district.



Preparation of new hospital site.

Stephenson and Meldrum were subsequently engaged as architects to prepare building plans for the new 'community hospital', public patients were to take precedence over private.

A later meeting determined that the hospital would be erected on the existing site in Sloane Street.

The Hospital Building Fund Appeal closed on December 30, 1929 at 8,136 pounds, considered adequate for a new single-storey building with maternity and specialist wards, provided the Charities Board would give a certain portion of the total cost.

On May 1, 1930 the Charities Board approved the declaration of the 'Stawell District Hospital' as a Community Hospital. In effect this meant that while indigent and needy patients had priority, intermediate and private patients, who previously had no legal right of access to hospital treatment, could now be admitted when beds became available.

Funds continued to flow to the Building Fund which stood at 9,260 pounds at the end of 1931/32, prominent among the donors being the North Western Woollen Mills.

1932/33 was the turning point in relocating the hospital to its present site.

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## Hospital (1920-1934)

Mr L C Phillips, who was president for the year as he had been in 1914/15 and 1915/16, visited the secretary of the Charities Board at Melbourne in September 1932 to find out not only the amount of the government grant, but also to suggest that the then hospital could be put to some other use.

Following a visit to inspect the buildings by the Inspector General of Mental Health to ascertain their suitability for a special institution an additional 2,000 pounds towards an infectious diseases block and 500 pounds for preparation of a new site was promised.

A subsequent Commonwealth State Joint Loan Fund loan of 3,000 pounds was arranged to ensure the buildings completion. At this stage the Hospital Building Fund stood at 10,208 pounds.

Despite public speculation on 'shifting sands', a thorough technical examination of the old St George Battery sands combined with its central location, sealed its selection

as the site for the new hospital.

Tenders were let for the site's preparation to E A Watts at 275 pounds, which was done mainly by 'sustenance' workers, the structure to Thompson and Chalmers at 15,963 pounds and mechanical services to E A Atherion and Sons at 1,453 pounds to provide a new 30 bed community hospital, at a total contracted price of 18,231 pounds, including other site and minor works.

Mr G H Robson, monumental mason, presented a suitably engraved foundation stone to the committee.

The structural tender was some 2,250 pounds above the estimate and extra works such as fencing, roadmaking and temporary workmen's accommodation amounted to 620 pounds, together with 690 pounds for additional hospital equipment were responsible for the 3,000 pounds loan.

On September 3, 1933 the foundation stone of the new hospital was laid by Mr L C Phillips the immediate past president at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. For those with a palindromic bent this translates to 3391933, too coincidental to be unplanned.

Copies of the 'Stawell Times News' and

'Stawell News' containing articles on the hospital's development, past and present, were placed on white satin under the stone. A very large crowd was in attendance and Mr. Phillips was presented with a trowel and gavel.

On December 12 1933 the original foundation stone of the Pleasant Creek Hospital which had previously been lifted was relaid at the entrance of the new hospital by W Campbell and W Harris, who as school children had seen it placed in position 73 years before. Most of the original pioneers of the district and/or their descendants were in attendance.

Under this stone were placed the coins retrieved when it was removed, together with a copy of the 'Ararat Advertiser' dated December 30, 1860 with no Stawell newspapers being produced at that time. Mrs Barker and Mrs Wilson who also had been at the past ceremony unveiled a commemorative plaque. ■



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# Current Hospital

## 1934 - 1952



Opening of the hospital by Sir William Irvine on January 30, 1934.

On January 20, 1934 the new hospital was officially opened by the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria Sir William Irvine. Lady Irvine turned a golden replica of the key, inscribed with the Stawell Borough coat-of-arms, in the main door. About 3,500 people attended the ceremony and a collection was

taken up for the building fund which raised 1,014 pounds towards an appeal target of 3,000 pounds.

Patients were transferred to the new hospital during March 1934, leaving the old hospital to be taken over as a 'mental establishment' branch of the Ararat Asylum.

In the event the 'mental establishment' became a school for intellectually handicapped children, mainly from Melbourne.

At opening, the new hospital had 15 wards (four male, three female, four maternity and two each for children and infectious diseases) accommodating 36 patients.

The new W H Syme Infectious Disease Ward was constructed away from the main building with accommodation for eight patients.

Staffing also increased by three, with an extra sister and two staff nurses, to 18.

All seemed set for a new era in the hospital's service to the community.

The period 1935-1953 was dominated by increasing salaries and wages, to a large extent brought about by the second world war with its attendant staffing shortages, the expansion of the hospital benefits system throughout Victoria in conjunction with government legislation allowing a four-tier patient classification - public, intermediate, semi-private and private, reduced working hours for hospital nursing staff and employees down from 48 to 44 then 40 hours per week, courtesy of the Federal Labour Government and from the late 1940s onward the appointment of the Hospital and Charities Commission in 1948, replacing the old Charities Board.

The hospital expanded and improved its services. In 1937 the approach roadway was remade for better access, a small extension was carried out in 1938 to augment nursing staff accommodation and allow other uses for some of the staff rooms, but this still required two nurses to sleep out in rented accommodation.

A new maternity wing was opened on July 26, 1941 by the Hon H H Olney, MLC at a cost of about 3,800 pounds, thus increasing bed numbers to 62, the female public ward was extended and new nurses quarters were added to Syme Ward in the same year and by 1948 the nursing accommodation crisis was becoming so acute that a property was bought on the corner of Sloane and Wimmera Streets for a new nurses home

Over the period staffing levels increased from 18 in 1935 to 50 in 1953.

Inpatient numbers in the same period only rose from 625 to 1,218, while total expenditure on running costs soared from 3,450 pounds to nearly 34,100 pounds almost 10 times as high.

Many local contributions, donations and bequests were transferred to specific purpose, endowment or capital funds and did not appear in the 'financial operating' or maintenance accounts.

Following the implementation of the Hospital and Charities



The completed hospital in 1934.



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## Current Hospital 1934 - 1952

Commission the Board of Management was reduced to 16 members including the president, two vice presidents and the honourable treasurer. A

government and municipal nominee were to be included on the Board, initially Mr

W G Sharpley and Mr C Cashin respectively.



Front view of new hospital showing nurses quarters.

A 'Younger Set' organisation, complementary to the Ladies Auxiliary, was formed in 1937, but disbanded in 1941 because of other wartime commitments by members.

In 1945 the Hospital Benefits Act abolished fees and means tests for patients in public hospitals and the Commonwealth paid six shillings per day for all public and non-public patients.

In 1952 plans were afoot to build a new nurses home, revamp and extend the hospital buildings, replace theatre equipment and obtain a mobile X ray unit.

The hospital was associated with the Red Cross local branch, the Red Cross Blood Bank, the consultative council on Poliomyelitis and a new service sponsored by the Peter MacCallum Clinic.' ■

## Stawell Hospital 1953-1966

The period 1953-1966 was a relatively stable one once the wage increases and shorter working week had settled down.

Annual running costs rose from 43,000 pounds in 1953/54 to about 77,700 pounds (\$155,400) in 1965/66, the largest portion being salaries and wages from nearly 26,900 pounds to 53,000 pounds (\$106,000).

Income rose from 39,900 pounds to 74,300 pounds (\$148,600). Government grants rose from 20,800 pounds to a maximum 38,000 pounds in 1962/3 before falling to 33,400 pounds (\$66,800) in 1965/66.

This was counter balanced by patient fees starting at nearly 16,000 pounds, falling to 600 pounds in 1959/60 before rising to 38,850 pounds (\$77,700) in 1965/66.

Staffing in the same period rose from the high 40s to the low 60s, including full and part time employees.

In late 1956 a public bed was 36 shillings per day, whereas intermediate was 54 shillings. Semi-private and private beds cost 60 shillings and 72 shillings. In 1959/60 these bed fees rose again to 21 pounds, 25 pounds and four shillings, 28 pounds and 32 pounds and 11 shillings per week respectively.

One unwelcome outcome of the new fees system was that outstanding patient fees which amounted to just over 4,000 pounds in 1953/54 reached 12,800 pounds (\$25,600) in 1965/66.



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Apart from the opening of the new trained nursing staff (sisters) home, on July 8, 1956 by Dr J H Lindell, Chairman of the Hospital and Charities Commission costing 24,000 pounds, there was the purchase of a brick veneer residence in Wimmera Street for the manager and in the same year provision of a new self-contained flat for the matron in 1960/61, little was added in the way of hospital buildings.

By 1964 however, plans were under way for new outpatients accommodation and a new operating theatre suite.

In the meantime the kitchen equipment was replaced with the latest gas appliances (1956), boilers were converted to oil-firing (1959), a new laundry service with Horsham Hospital was introduced (1960), new electrical switchboards were installed (1961) and all power points in the wards replaced (1962).

A nurses aide regional training school was set up at Warracknabeal in 1955 and among the students in that first year were three from Stawell Hospital.

The school was an initiative of the Wimmera Hospitals Regional Council



Opening of the nurses home on July 8, 1956.

formed in 1954. In 1960/1 Miss Valerie Eldridge gained first place in Victoria and Miss Stella Weir first place in the Wimmera school for nursing aide examinations.

By the mid 1950s to early 1960s there was a shortage of doctors in country areas. Honorary medical officers had replaced the system of honorary surgeons and medical officers at Stawell in 1950.

Among the honorary medical officers appointed during this shortage were Dr R N Castle (1955/56), Dr D R McDonald

(1960/61) and Mr K L Hayes (reappointed 1960/61 after resigning in 1955/56).

These three served until 1975 when Dr McDonald resigned. Mr Hayes continued until January 1986 and Dr Castle still remains.

In 1966 the first major works in a developing plan to extend the hospital with a start on stage one - the new outpatient accommodation and operating theatre commenced. ■

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## The period 1966 - 1982



Mr G P Frencham unveils the monument to commemorate the site of original Doctor's Hill hospital.

The period 1966 to 1982 was characterised by much of the activity being in providing additional patient and staff accommodation, a shortage of nursing staff midway through the period, a burgeoning workload, a massive increase in running costs and State government aid and more reliance on public contributions to fund capital works, in fact by 1978 all contributions were diverted to the capital fund.

At the beginning of the period operating expenditure was nearly \$154,000 with income of just over that amount.

By 1981/82 the figures were just under \$2.3m in each case a fifteen-fold increase. Running costs were, as usual, more affected by salaries and wages increases cost just under \$108,000 to just under \$1.5m and the introduction of 'Medibank' by the Federal Labour Government in 1975 which saw the hospital responsible for payments to doctors and the ambulance service, both of which amounted to about \$109,000 in 1981/82.

On the income side State government grants rose from \$71,000 to nearly \$1.45m, while patient fees increased from just over \$78,000 to \$716,000 including pathology and radiology payments.

The new outpatient and operating theatre suite costing about \$75,000 was opened by Dr J H Lindell on August 10, 1967. A new operating table was funded to the tune of \$910 by the Ladies Auxiliary.

Tenders for stage 2 relocation of the children's ward, renovating and re-equipping the kitchen and renovation of the old X-Ray department for a waiting room, were let in 1967/68 and the works completed during 1968/9.

In 1969/70 the Stawell Centenary Committee raised \$14,941 towards the Hospital Centenary Appeal for the provision of a Geriatric Day Centre and in the same year a hospital/ambulance radio link was established, one of the first outside the metropolitan area.

Late in 1971/72 tenders were let for the first stage of the geriatric complex which entailed alterations and additions to Syme Ward. The work was completed at a cost of about \$120,000 and the complex opened on June 25, 1973 with 19 beds.

Coincidentally in the 1972/3 year, a monument, designed and erected by Mr M M Robson on behalf of the Rotary Club of Stawell and situated between Stawell and Deep Lead, was unveiled by Mr G P Frencham on November 18, 1972 to commemorate the site of the original Doctor's Hill Hospital.

During 1973/74 pathology and radiology services were established on a part-time visiting basis in conjunction with the Ararat and District Hospital.

Syme Ward was closed for about six weeks during December-January because of the staffing shortfall. Advertisements were placed in Australia and overseas for nursing staff.

To further attract nursing staff tenders were approved to upgrade the sisters' home and discussions undertaken to upgrade the nurses quarters in the main block.

Work also began on the new Day Centre towards the end of the year placing further pressure on a necessary increase in staff resources.

Perhaps in response to the hospital's difficulties the Younger Set



Mr Murray Byrne, MLC (left) opens the Syme Ward in 1973.



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re-formed after disbanding at the beginning of the second world war.

In 1975/76 the sisters' home was refurbished to better attract senior nursing staff.

All wards were to be successively re-equipped with new Joyce Hi-Lo beds at the rate of 12 a year and Kevin Heinze looked at a program for beautification of the hospital grounds.

The Day Care Centre was completed at a cost of \$157,000 and began receiving patients in November 1976 and during the course of 1976/77 filling material was supplied by the Gas and Fuel Corporation and Stawell Town Council, among others, to provide extended parking for 70 cars and a re-design of the entrance driveway.

Plans conceived in the same year for a new administration and ward block did not proceed, but despite the pressures on staff and accommodation the hospital was accredited by the Australian Council on Hospital Standards until October 6, 1978.

A five point plan was devised covering new buildings and extensions, the use of existing buildings for expanding services,

the nurses quarters were unoccupied by this time, upgrading the sisters' home, sealing the driveway and parking area and reviewing staff needs in all parts of the hospital.

In December 1978 the Hospital and Charities

Commission was replaced by the Health Commission with the result that the plans were held in abeyance.

In 1978/79, the Syme Ward was reclassified as a Nursing Home.

By the end of the 1979/80 year the Premier, Sir Rupert Hamer, two State Ministers, the Director of Hospitals and a team of high level Health Commission officers all visited the hospital to see what problems existed.

A further modified development plan was drawn up towards the end of the year.

In 1981/82 a new order in the hospital



Volunteers were called in during the statewide hospital strike in 1975.

mainly as a result of Health Commission initiatives, saw changes made to the board and the hospital organisation revamped.

The secretary/manager position became sole manager and was filled by the appointment of Mr M B Delahunty, while the matron, Mrs L J Hoare, became director of nursing.

A firm of architects was retained to produce a master plan for the future hospital development, this continuing the process commenced in 1976 and progressed in 1978. ■



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## Expansion from 1982

Starting in 1982 there was significant expansion in facilities and services. It had taken more than 120 years from the opening of the Pleasant Creek Hospital for annual running costs to reach \$2.3m in 1981/82, but it took only another six years for these costs to double and a further five years to triple to almost \$7m in 1992/93.

The following year 'Case Mix' funding was introduced by the Kennett Liberal/National Coalition whereby complicated formulae based on the numbers and types of services actually provided, determined the size of government grants rather than anticipated services to be provided in line with the population of the area served and past performance.

As a result, government grants fell by some \$0.4m, the biggest impact being felt by salaries and wages (about \$0.2m) which led to a number of staff retrenchments and re-arrangement of duties.

During 1982/3 the master plan began to take effect. A contract for redevelopment of the kitchen and provision of a staff dining area was let for \$366,000 and approval was given to extend the nursing home (part of the revamped Syme Ward) to cater for another 11 patients to a total of 30 patients.

In the following year the Syme, female and maternity ward bathrooms were upgraded.

'Medicare' was introduced in February 1984 which entailed a

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Minister for Health, Mr David White opened the 'Dr Norman Castle Medical Wing' on August 24, 1987.

greater proportion of patients going 'public' instead of private with a deleterious effect on patient fee income.

The year 1984/5 was an eventful one in that the new kitchen complex was officially opened by Mr T Roper, MP in September 1984.

The extension to the nursing home, to be known as 'The Herbert and Francis Perry Wing' commenced on November 12, 1984 at an estimated cost of \$532,000.

The Health Commission also approved the new 24 bed acute ward to replace the male Ward and allocated an initial \$1.86m towards the project.

The year 1985/6 was similarly eventful in that work began on the 24 bed ward, the 'Dr. Norman Castle Medical Wing'.

The Perry Wing was officially opened by Dr R Blewett on July 13, 1986. An additional 20 staff were needed for the 14 bed wing.

The new medical wing was occupied on August 24, 1987 and officially opened by the Minister for Health, Mr. David White, the following day. The project had cost \$1.6m with \$1.5m being provided by the government.

A new radiology complex was opened by Mr A Zamurs, Regional Director of Health on May 29, 1988 built in part of the female ward complex.

In 1988/9 approval was given for the 'South Ward Redevelopment' project to proceed in two stages the culmination of plans which had been crystallised during 1985/86.

The first stage involved the provision of a new 16 bed midwifery/surgical ward, delivery suite, front entrance/reception area, pharmacy and staff cafeteria at an estimated cost of \$2.5m.

Work was completed at a cost of about \$3.5m and the new 16 bed 'Allan and Ivy Simpson Wing' was occupied on June 3, 1991 and officially opened by the Hon Joan E Kirner, Premier of Victoria, on July 12, 1991.

Stawell District Hospital Foundation was conceived in early 1989 with the aim of attracting \$1m in funds with interest only to be used for the provision of equipment.

During 1992/93 the hospital reached agreement with the Department of Health and Community Services to construct a new 30 bed nursing home, including six psychogeriatric beds, on a site in Sloane Street donated by the former Stawell Croquet Club in 1990/91.

The 'New Concept Nursing Home' was opened on July 1, 1995 and occupied on August 1 1995. It was subsequently named the 'Helen Schutt Nursing Home' on March 15, 1996. ■

## Looking at 1995 and beyond

In July 1995, the Board of Management hosted a celebratory dinner for the Y-Zetts, originally called the 'Younger Set', to acknowledge their 20 years continuous service to the hospital.

In October 1995 Dr Norm Castle celebrated his 40th year of service to the community and was awarded an Australian Doctor GP Award as a result of being nominated by his peers.

1995/96, the hospital in conjunction with East Grampians Health Service, Grampians Community Health Centre and the Central Western Division of General Health was successful in a funding submission to conduct a Post Acute Care Project.

The hospital was also approved to provide a 'Hospital in the Home' program to commence in late 1996. This program offered an alternative to in hospital care for clients within 15 to 20 kilometre of Stawell,

who could receive their medical and nursing care in their own home.

The Pathology Department was privatised in 1995 with the tender contract going to St John of God's Pathology, based at Ballarat.

During the 1995/96 period the Ladies Auxiliary raised a total of \$7,894 and in 1995 the Y-Zetts donated \$5,000 to the Helen Schutt Nursing Home.

Major hospital equipment purchases included a colour doppler ultrasound at \$146,300 a new general X-ray system at \$150,000 and an echocardiograph system at \$16,800.

Planning for the construction of a Helipad commenced in August of 1996 and was completed in August 1997. It was officially declared open on September 3rd 1997 by The Honourable Jeff Kennett, MLA Premier of Victoria.

The Helipad was constructed with the assistance of the Northern Grampians Shire Council, Stawell Gold Mines Pty Ltd and H T Hamilton & Sons and was designed by retired municipal Engineer Mr. John Wynd. Other capital improvements included the



Premier Jeff Kennett was surrounded by youngsters at the opening of new helipad in 1997.

relocation of the Pathology Laboratory to operate out of the old nursing home, Perry Wing. Capital works included the commencement of a new Ambulance Station on the hospital grounds, the purchase of endoscopic equipment costing \$62,200 and a patient monitoring system for \$40,140.

The hospital also entered into a four year contract with Paul Walker Radiology who would provide the hospital with a twice weekly visit by a radiologist, access to qualified relieving staff and provision of a Composed Tomography (CT) service.

The Post Acute Care project was well accepted in the Central Grampians Region with 505 clients receiving assistance over the first twelve months.

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## 1995 and beyond



The Stawell hospital annual charity race day and PGA celebrity pro-am golf tournament fundraising events saw the purchase of a new Laproscopic Cholecystectomy at the new hospital.

State government approval was received to commence planning for a redevelopment of the hospital's theatre, wards and day procedure facilities.

The hospital also committed to a regional information technology system that would serve all public hospitals in the Grampians region.

An upgrade and replacement of the

hospital's information systems and electronically controlled devices was commenced to achieve Year 2000 conformity. This was in preparation for a potential problem with information and communication systems due to dates prior to, during or after the Year 2000 changeover.

A Critical Hospital Operating Contingency Plan, in line with the Department of Human Services requirements was developed to allow the hospital to manage local critical infrastructure failures and to provide an initial response to potential risk scenarios, assuring continuing patient care and safety.

Equipment upgrades at this time totalled \$462,100.

In the operating suite 1443 patients underwent 1622 procedures an increase of nine percent on the previous year, with expansion of orthopaedic general and endoscopic services.

Development of a pre-admission clinic was successful with elective surgery patients seen prior to surgery.

In May 1999 the Minister for Health, Mr R Knowles announced that the major \$4.3



The PGA celebrity pro-am golf tournament attracted top golfers in the 90s including international Bob Shearer.

million upgrade to the hospital's operating theatre and associated facilities could proceed as planned. Completion of this project ensured the hospital met requirements to remain as an acute hospital.



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## Stawell Regional Health

In 1999/2000 an expansion was seen in the range of community based services including Post Acute Care, Hospital in the Home, Diabetic Educator, Dietitian, Speech Therapy and Pre-Admission Clinic. Two initiatives were implemented relating to the increasing difficulty encountered by rural communities in obtaining and keeping medical practitioners in non metropolitan areas.

This included the development of a strategy for the sustainable recruitment and retention of medical practitioners for Stawell and District and the commencement of an out of hours telephone triage service by the hospital.

The triage service allowed medical practitioners to switch their after-hours phone to a dedicated line, answered by a specially trained triage nurse.

This allowed a 50 percent decrease in after hour calls to the practitioners on call,

significantly improving their quality of life out of work hours.

The hospital continued a close working relationship with the East Grampians Health Service in Ararat sharing a significant number of programmes and services and enhancing sub regional planning.

As part of the Year 2000 compliance and planning, the hospital completed a major upgrade of its information systems and installed a new emergency generator costing \$127,000 largely funded by a State Government grant.

The name change to that of Stawell Regional Health, was gazetted on March 15, 2001.

This name change was in order to reflect the wider service provided to the community, more than just a hospital and incorporating a wide range of services.

In the May 2001 State budget, official status and funding was finally given to upgrade the hospital's facilities. The total project was budgeted at \$6.1 million with \$3.3 million for the first stage provided in the budget.



**The opening of the John and Margaret Bennett Day Centre in September 2001.**

Facility upgrades included nine single bed and ten two bed units, with the current six four bed wards removed and a best practice work flow designed operating theatre, three times larger than the current area.

Also included was a stand alone day surgery unit, with six day surgery beds and purpose built accommodation for the radiology facilities and a new birthing suite. Changes would also allow the accident and emergency department to be integrated into the seven day medical ward.

In October 2000 an additional five beds was approved over the existing 30 beds in the Helen Schutt nursing home and a \$1.5 million upgrade to facilities to allow self

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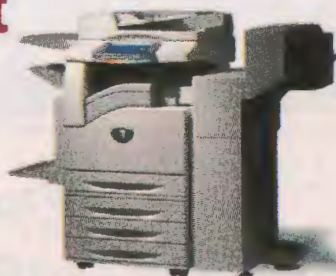
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## Stawell Regional Health

contained cluster accommodation, separate living/lounge and dining areas, and increased day living/communal activity space.

The nursing home also achieved Aged Care Accreditation in October 2000.

Funding of the redevelopment of the hospital was approved and Stage I commenced in May 2002 budgeted at \$3.8 million.

The costs associated with the capital redevelopments required the board to launch a community appeal with a target of \$1 million to be raised over three years chaired by Dr Andrew Cunningham. By the end of the 2001/2002 financial year the total stood at \$810,000.

The John and Margaret Bennett Day Centre was opened in September 2001 in a building that was originally the Lady Brooks Kindergarten.

Funding of \$650,000 was received for a three year Commonwealth Regional Health service programme for the sub region. This program was aimed at improving health services to the communities of Halls Gap, Glenorchy, Landsborough, Navarre, Marnoo and Great Western.

The community appeal launched in January 2002 exceeded its target and resulted in raising \$1.3 million in pledges.

The Hospital Foundation received a bequest of \$240,000 from the estate of Mr Alex Pickering raising its balance to \$930,000 and in appreciation the Radiology Department was named in his honour. ■



State Minister for Aged Care Gavin Jennings (left) opens the upgraded nursing home in 2003.

## 2003 Onwards

In April 2003 the upgraded nursing home was opened by the State Minister for Aged Care, Mr Gavin Jennings. The name 'Helen Schutt Nursing Home' was changed to the 'Macpherson Smith Nursing Home' in line with a change in name of the Helen M Schutt Trust which has been a generous benefactor since opening in 1995.

As part of the \$7.8 capital development, the Dr R N Castle Operating Theatre Suite was commissioned in May 2004 and the Tattersalls Emergency Department was commissioned in February 2004.

The single biggest increase in hospital activity was associated with chemotherapy treatments provided in the John Bowen Oncology Unit. This increased to 685 treatments with 30 percent of these treatments to people who did not live in Stawell or the District.

On Friday, May 27, 2005, the Minister for Health, The Honourable Bronwyn Pike, opened Stawell Regional Health's Stage 1 and 2 development costing \$7.8 million.

This completed fourteen years of planning and development since the project was first identified in 1991, with funding of \$6.9 million coming from State funding and \$900,000 from the local community.

A final redevelopment budgeted at \$712,000 commenced to see the establishment of a staff education centre, medical library, staff facilities, new mortuary, quiet room and interconnecting walkways to the allied health building.

In late 2004 in partnership with the Northern Grampians Shire Council a feasibility study was undertaken into the establishment of a 'Health and Community Services Precinct' in Stawell.

The third and final Stage of the hospital redevelopment was completed in December 2005 this gave the health service a full set of first class facilities.

As part of the formulation of a sustainable sub regional radiology service, a joint radiology contract was let between Stawell and East Grampians Health Services and a common Radiology Group.

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## Hospital 2003 onwards

The board of management with the Northern Grampians Shire hosted a dinner in October 2005 to thank Dr Norman Castle OAM for his 50 years of continuous service to the Stawell community and 25 years on the Board of Management of Stawell Regional Health and its predecessor Stawell District Hospital.

Since January 2003 Stawell Regional Health had delivering a range of services at no charge to meet the needs of the indigenous community living in the Halls Gap/Pomonal area.

This was delivered from the Budja Budja Co-operative in Halls Gap. In order to enhance the outcomes achieved in this program a second male Indigenous Community health Development worker was to work with the current female Koori Community Health Development worker.

The ACE Radio Broadcasters Day Procedure Unit had been open three years with 90 percent (1,095 patients) of all elective surgical admissions being managed

through the Day Procedure Unit.

In 2006 long serving CEO Mr Michael Delahunty left Stawell to take up a similar position at Echuca Health Service. Michael had been at Stawell Regional Health for 24 years and had made a significant contribution to the development of the Health Service over that period.

In May 2007 the board appointed Mr Peter Edwards to the position of CEO.

There were no major redevelopments undertaken in 2007-2008, however, several minor project were commenced or completed.

One project involved the completion of fire safety and emergency evacuation stairs and the installation of hose reels. The project was valued in excess of \$75,000.

Stawell Regional Health also received \$70,300 under the Council of Australian Government Long Stay Older Patients initiative.

These funds were allocated to a number of minor capital projects and the purchase of equipment items identified through an internal audit.

Stawell Regional Health received support from its community and in particular the Ladies Auxiliary, Y-Zetts and Murray to Moyne Sprockets.

During the year the three fundraising groups made significant contributions to Stawell Regional Health - Ladies Auxiliary (\$12,250), Y-Zetts (\$11,300) and Murray to Moyne Sprockets (\$30,000).

In 2008 the Stawell Health and Community Centre building program commenced.

Grampians Community Health Centre is to be the main tenant, however Stawell Regional Health will occupy a significant amount of space on the first and second floors.

In April 2008 SRH took on the management of the Rural Health Bank Pilot.

The primary aim of the RHB project is to provide a central organisation to co-ordinate the placement of professional development as nurses and allied health staff who provide relief services in the Grampians region. ■



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