From COTTAGE

To COMMUNITY

THE FIRST 100 YEARS OR SO
OF BLANDFORD HOSPITAL
FROM COTTAGE TO COMMUNITY

An account of the first 100 years or so of Blandford Hospital

by

Dr Ian Wilson

President of the League of Friends
Foreword

I have lived in West Dorset since 1985, in fact returning from County Durham to work for Blandford Hospital and since that day I have had a working relationship with the hospital and the local General Practitioners. I have seen the transition from a Cottage Hospital to a Community Hospital, always with the health of the local community very much at heart. In 1985 Doctor Ian Wilson was a practising GP and held other senior positions, such as the Chairman of the Community Hospitals Association, influencing the way care was delivered locally and nationally. Since Ian's retirement his love for Blandford Hospital has undoubtedly led him to become President of the League of Friends.

Blandford Community Hospital has gone through many changes over the years and it seems very fitting that this book is published during the 60th anniversary of the NHS. It is a fine testament to the people who have worked there, the patients who had undoubtedly received high quality care. The hospital has won various prestigious awards and in recent years has been awarded a charter mark and is the only hospital in the United Kingdom that has a Practice Development Unit status (this is where the hospital is accredited by a licensed University) and in Blandford Hospital's case – Leeds and all departments can demonstrate that they use current best practice.

The dedication and commitment of the staff of Blandford Hospital make this hospital special. The Staff are proud to offer such an excellent health care service to the local community, helped very much by the League of Friends who over the last sixty years have so much, in time and money to enhance the treatment and comfort of the patients and have supported the staff in many ways.

Blandford Community Hospital is at the heart of a healthy community and I thank Dr Ian Wilson for his diligence and research to record the history of this very special hospital.

Steven E. Cole
General Manager, Community Hospitals in Dorset.
Acknowledgements

Whilst clearing out my father's (Dr Kenneth) desk and study it occurred to me that someone should write the history of the Hospital as the history was all here albeit in hundreds of bits and pieces. Plus the bulk of this story came from him not throwing anything away. Annie Drennan at the hospital has been a great help as has Sarah Connor and Emma Campbell of the League of Friends. Dorothy Roberts a patient in Tarrant Ward for many years on the staff of the Hospital has helped to identify staff in the photographs. I acknowledge also the help of John Tory of Travellers Rest, the Portman Trust in London, Ben Cox and the Town Council. Also an old photo from Chris Brickells mother. Pat Rutter past matron and others of the nursing staff have produced many photographs, some of which are included in the book. There are many other people I have probably forgotten but I am very grateful for all their help. Many thanks to Steve Cole for writing the Foreword. Nothing would have been possible without the help of Mo Haines who did all the typing. To her, very many thanks indeed. Purely Print have been very patient with a novice and a tremendous help in publishing this book.

Signed

IAN WILSON MBE MB Ch.B FRCGP
CHAPTER I
The Beginning

It is reported elsewhere that in the 13th century St Leonards Chapel was used as a hospital for the sick of Blandford and for travellers returning from the crusades but for the purposes of this chronicle we move swiftly to the late 19th century. It was reported in the Blandford Express dated 17 March 1883 that there was a wagon accident in Tarrant Hinton. The injured man was conveyed to Blandford where he was received into the new Cottage Hospital adjoining the corner coffee house. This Cottage Hospital was supplied at the expense of the Honourable Miss Portman early in 1883 adjoining the corner coffee house at the junction of Salisbury Street with Whitecliff Mill Street. This is where the man injured by the wagon was brought. This building was known in 1885-1887 as The Nurse House. Although it appears that it was not accepting in patients who were sent to Bath, Weymouth, Bournemouth or Dorchester but in April 1888 plans were made for the Nurse House to revert to its real use as a Cottage Hospital although it
is doubtful in fact whether it ever did. In December 1888 a new
cottage hospital was planned at Pickett Close. This became the nucleus
of the present hospital. Suffice it to say that in the 19th century we
saw a widespread awakening of social consciousness in this country
and especially with regard to the sick and the injured. This tendency
was greatly accelerated in the latter half of this century largely due to
the influence of Miss Florence Nightingales work in the matter of
adequate training of nurses and improved planning and administration
of hospitals. This urge to acquire a local hospital was felt in Blandford
and was warmly supported by the local doctors. Donations and
subscriptions were solicited and the first meeting of donors and
subscribers was held on the 1 November 1888 but it appears that the
hospital had already been functioning for possibly 5 years before
this. The Reverend James Penny was elected Chairman and the first
Committee included him, the Honorary Treasurer and Vice Chairman,
Mr R Lock, Honorary Secretary, Miss Daniel, Medical Officers,
Dr Bacet, Dr Spooner, Mr Ingram, Dr Daniel and the Matron was
Miss Short. A plaque in memory of all the work for the hospital by
Mr R Lock was in the entrance porch of the old hospital.

Miss Short was at first the only nurse but she soon found that extra
help was necessary as from the very beginning the hospital was much
appreciated. There is a quotation from the first report for the year
December 1 1888 to December 31 1889 “that the hospital was opened
on December 1 1888 and the Committee can only begin their first
report with words of heartiest thankfulness and praise to the great
giver of all good for the success which has in every way attended the
Blandford Cottage Hospital”. The scheme was started on exceptional
favourable circumstances the Honourable Miss Portman who
had a house at the disposal of the Committee and undertaken to provide both matron and servant while
Lord Portman most kindly engaged to meet the entire cost of bed
an annual subscription of £50.00. From the first the five beds and one c
have seldom been unoccupied. This must have been the first Viscom
Portman who in fact died in 1888. Two cases of rheumatic fever at
others of rheumatism have been successfully treated, possibly by the
use of hot air and warm baths. The arrangement for the air bath was
designed by the Reverend C Fines Clinton. 8 out of the 46 patients
were children, 15 of the cases were in some villages around Blandfo
and confidence in the hospital has taken the place of any mistr
which such persons may have had. Many little gifts have from time
time been brought by their former patients in the shape of a few
vegetables and flowers. It must be obvious that the work of nursing
so small a house especially in hot and sultry weather and when ever
bed is occupied must be of a trying character and to complete the wo
so well bigger and larger premises are greatly to be desired.

The hospital was so fully used that it soon became very obvious th
expansion was necessary and through the generosity of the Portm
family the present site was acquired and a hospital building erected
the total cost of £3,165.9s 10p all of which was born by the Portm
family. The matron with four patients moved into the new building o
25 April 1891 and more nurses were engaged. There were beds for s
males, six females and four cots. There were also two private beds t
charge of which was one or two guineas a week. The matrons sala
was £30.00 per year and the nurses £16.00 rising to £20.00. The
figures were increased over the years up until 1948. As will be show
later in the history the local doctors and visiting consultants gave the
services absolutely free. With rising costs however they demand
small fees from the patients. At some point in the 1930’s Blandford
District Hospital League was founded and paid the cost of its member
Subscriptions and donations were necessary and a copy of the accoun
of 1888 and 1891 are shown.

The generosity of the Portman family knew no bounds and it seem
strange that the present hospital was not called the Portman Hospit
While the Yeatman Hospital in Sherborne was opened in 1866
memory of the Reverend Harry Far Yeatman who was born in 1786 a
died in 1861 and was the Chairman of Dorset Quarter Sessions 6
Portman's Steward and lived at Bryanston and recording in her diaries the following.

"15 December 1888. Today the new cottage hospital (Nurse House) was formally opened at Blandford. There were two patients, one a man, I forget his complaint (we have already mentioned that and who was run over by a wagon), two a woman who was there under rather laughable circumstances. By the will of the first Lord Wilverton every person in his service claimed a year's wages probably intended that the domestic servants only were intended to receive this but through a terrible error everybody in his employ became legally entitled to it. I believe that it took about £8,000 to pay off all these legacies. Amongst the recipients was the first female patient in Blandford Cottage Hospital. She took her money with the rest last Wednesday. She spent and drank some of it and then went up to bed but she thought she would like a drop more and set about going down to fetch it. She stumbled and fell falling from the top of the stairs to be bottom and broke her leg and was admitted to the Cottage Hospital."

The Isolation Hospital

I wish to include the Isolation Hospital at this stage in the history because I do not know where else to put it. It would appear that this hospital was founded immediately after the first world war in probably old Army Huts in Shaftesbury Lane and is situated where the U Drive compound is at the moment with the cottage next door, the red brick cottage, where the matron, a Miss Lucas, and nursing staff lived. There are a number of beds and illustrated is the rules for visiting these beds. Also the agreement nominating Dr Kenneth Wilson as the public vaccinator and his Contract is very interesting to read. The Isolation Hospital admitted cases of smallpox, chicken pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, erysipelas and all the other infectious illnesses. We must remember that at
this stage in 1920 there were no anti-biotics and the children who had these serious illnesses of scarlet fever and diphtheria were pulled through it by pure nursing skills and tender loving care. It would appear that at the beginning this place was run by the guardians of the poor and as can be told by the agreement between the guardians of the poor and Dr Kenneth Wilson to be the first district medical officer and public vaccinator. This agreement makes good reading. In days past each village had a poor house and in the end each village would send a representative into Blandford where the workhouse was built which is of course now Castlemain House. The guardians of the Blandford Union were the representatives from each village and they were responsible for the poor people and met every month in Blandford. Dr Kenneth Wilson was appointed the Medical Officer of number one of the district of the Union at a salary of £110 per year which included being the public vaccinator. He took over from Dr Daniel who was the first one to hold this office. Dr Kenneth Wilson remained in charge of the Isolation Hospital until March 1947, closed by Blandford Rural District. It became a toy factory making toy soldiers.

CHAPTER II
Bricks and Mortar

It soon became obvious that the nurses house kindly donated by Lord Portman and his sister Miss Portman was not sufficient for the needs of the neighbourhood as far as hospitals were concerned. There were only five beds and one cot but they were very much appreciated. It was very soon felt that an expansion was both desirable and necessary and through the generosity of the Portman family the provision of a site at Pickett Close was provided and a building was erected. The matron

Postcard Blandford Hospital

Postcard Deer Park

and the patients moved into this building, the site of the present hospital on the 25 April 1891. This building consisted of 12 beds, four cots and two private wards. The beds were situated in two extensions to the main building and facing south on to the recreation ground. In the centre was the one private ward with French windows opening out onto the garden and a very pleasant room it was. Behind this was the theatre and further back was the kitchen and various domestic departments. Beyond the theatre was the other private ward which went through an annex room which was eventually used as a sort of casualty and theatre preparation room and next to that was a room for containing the sterilisation equipment. Outside that was a sort of yard and across the yard was a mortuary and various sheds. One interesting part to the building which was discovered later on is a huge tank underneath the tarmac area in front of the hospital which collected all the rain water from the building and this was probably the only water supply to start with in the hospital. There was only one bath which
was used very rarely. Bed baths were the order of the day. In the 1920s a small portable x-ray unit was purchased and a small massage department was built. Major extensions took place in 1938 with the provision of a new women's ward, resident staff headquarters and domestic offices. In 1963 after the war the men's ward was enlarged and this gave the hospital 22 beds, two private wards and two cots. Also in 1963 an important modernisation took place in the conversion of the old solid fuel boiler to gas fired boiler. This was important cottage that was built in the grounds by the Portman family when the hospital was first built was used by a porter to be on site so that they could stoke the solid fuel boiler at regular intervals. The gas fired boiler meant that this cottage then became available and was eventually occupied by Miss Hetherington one of the matrons. During the war they built at the back of the hospital where the private ward was a gas cleansing unit which in fact was never used and in 1967 it was enlarged even further by the addition of a brand new physiotherapy unit paid for by the League of Friends. The gas cleansing unit eventually became the outpatient unit including the private ward. It is interesting to learn that this unit was used at one time certainly since the war as a maternity department. One or two mothers had their children there and the midwife was imported for the occasion. I think Mrs Coates of Hyd Farm, Pimperne was the last person to have a baby in the hospital. The end room there was two rooms. The end room was an office the next room became the consulting room for out patient and the old private ward was turned into two examination units. The room also held a portable Phillips x-ray machine which was extensively used for the diagnosis of fractures but was occasionally used for chest x-rays but not terribly satisfactory. In 1969 a new x-ray department was provided and a new medical records office. In 1973 was the first major upheaval in Health Service administration since the start in 1948 and regional area and district health authorities were formed. Up until now Blandford had been run by the Bournemouth & East Dorset Hospital Management Committee as will be stated in a later chapter but on the assumption of the District Management Team Blandford opted to go to West Dorset and the place in the West Dorset Team was to have a central District Hospital in...
Weymouth, Bridport, Sherborne, Shaftesbury and Blandford and in 1976 plans began to appear to create a larger hospital in Blandford on what was then the old drill hall or gun park belonging to the Dorset Regiment and the Dorset Yeomanry. Building of phase 1 began in 1982 with the final completion of the total building project in January 1986. The hospital could then accommodate 22 GPs acute beds 30 geriatric, 20 psycho geriatric patients. Three day hospitals each had 20 places for psycho geriatric with mental illness and 24 hour casualty departments and superior outpatient, physiotherapy and occupational therapy facilities. There is also a much better equipped theatre dealing with minor surgery cases which have now been upgraded to more major surgery being done. An interesting story about the theatre was that when it came the fact that we wanted a theatre in Blandford a major theatre was a very complicated affair and was obviously out of the pocket of the Health Service to pay for and they refused to pay for it and on visiting the professor of surgery at Southampton at the time who was Sir James Fraser he suggested that we have a Day Unit which is a much simpler affair and would suit our purposes very well and a Day Theatre was built with the generous help of the League of Friends at the hospital.

The beautiful copper beech tree in the front of the hospital was retained and a large hole was made in the canopy over the front door. Unfortunately it has recently acquired an infection and has had to be taken down.

This new hospital was opened by Princess Anne on 11 September 1986. This was a great occasion the Princess landing on the Grammar School playing fields in a red helicopter and then walking across the road to the hospital. She visited every department and spoke to every single patient and was given a very good lunch of roast duck by the hospital. She left later in the afternoon after a very splendid visit.
Some improvements were made to this new building which one could now state that Blandford had a community hospital rather than a cottage hospital but things were not quite perfect and the out patient department was replanned. A mental illness unit, the Milldown Unit as it was known, has been totally rebuilt and altered internally. The day hospital has been altered to include a bigger occupational therapy department. Shortly after the hospital opened the League of Friends managed to raise enough money to built a hydrotherapy pool attached to the physiotherapy department. This was actually built by the men from Hall& Woodhouse and has been a great boon for the hospital and to have a facility like this a great asset. Two family units were attached to the side of the mens ward. These have been very useful. There has been an alteration of the Accident and Emergency Department and two include a primary care unit and a extra room has been put on to accommodate a silent room for the Ear Nose and Throat Department for hearing tests, etc. Outside a car park exists at the far end of the site which is hardly big enough for the use of the hospital and the League of Friends and others are actively looking for further car parking space near the hospital. In the garden to celebrate the new millennium a very nicely laid out garden has been planned and built by the League of Friends. This is a very nice place for patients to use for walking and it is outside the family unit. Also a conservatory has been added on the side of the day room which lies in between the mens and womens ward. Very little can now be done to increase the size and use of the hospital as is a very restricted site and there are ambitious plans for a modern up to date theatre which will take in part of the day unit and other parts of the building but this is very much in the melting pot at the moment.

Upstairs is Tarrant Ward used for elderly patients for assessment or relief of relatives. Also Langbourne Ward used for elderly severely mentally ill patients now redesigned by monies left by Betty Highwood and now known as Betty Highwood Ward. 2006 meant the hospital had been as we know it now built for 20 years and in order to celebrate this we were honoured by a further visit from Princess Anne who visited all the departments spoke to the patients and many of the people who helped within the hospital. It was a good day for us all.

CHAPTER III

The Medical Staff

In 1888 when the nurses house was functioning the medical officers at the time was Dr Bacet, Dr Spooner, Dr Daniell, the matron was Miss Short and the doctors gave their services absolutely free and this has continued this free service to the hospital through all general practitioners and the consultant medical staff until the Health Service started in July 1948. The list of general practitioners who continue to work in the hospital included the following, Dr Alan Reid Wilson, Dr Leonard Bodley Scott, Dr Kenneth Wilson, Dr Dennis Olive, Dr Henry Spooner, son of Dr Caswell Spooner, Dr Tom Everett during the post war years, Dr John Craddock, Dr John Jackson, Dr Ian Wilson, son of Dr Kenneth Wilson and grand nephew of Dr Alan Reid Wilson. These were later followed by Dr Joan and Dr David Davies who took over the Old Bank House after Dr Henry Spooner was killed in a yachting accident. Any account of the history of Blandford Hospital should ensure that it includes a list of the devoted consultants who worked here and as already mentioned up until 1948 gave their services absolutely free.

We start with the general surgeons in the order of the years they were here. We start with Mr Bodley Scott, Mr Archie Mein, Mr Aidney, Mr Frank Forest, Mr Rolf Shepherd, Mr Puckle Markby, Mr John Verdon.

Sometimes these surgeons performed fairly major operations in Blandford such as thyroid cholecystectomies, mastectomies, repair of hernias and varicose veins and haemorrhoids. They were backed up by general practitioner surgeons. The Whitecliff Mill Practice always when appointing partners had work at the hospital in mind and Dr John Craddock for some years helped surgeons as did Dr Roger Prior more recently. The anaesthetics were covered in the main by Dr Eric Courtin, a wonderful cheerful man who was a great friend to us all. Again the Whitecliff Practice always made sure that they had a partner qualified in anaesthetics and we have one or two of these and most recently Dr John Evans.
Retirement of Frank Forrest

Friends of Blandford Hospital chairman Mr Frank Pike and treasurer Col Richard Taylor presenting a astroscope to Mr Peter Down seen escribing its use to from left) Col Taylor, taff Nurse Michele Torben and Mr Pike.
Consultant Physician and the first was a Dr Monington who lived in Salisbury who was always called in for second opinions and was a great support to Blandford doctors. Then came Dr Hindmarsh from Poole, followed by Dr Hill from Poole, Dr Peter Down and Dr Williams Geriatrician from Dorchester.

Gynaecology, Mr Buckle from Poole, was followed by Mr Donald Beaton from Dorchester and Mr Thelwell Jones also from Dorchester. Gynaecologists always held an antenatal and postnatal clinics and outpatient and minor gynaecological operations such as pelvic floor repairs and D&Cs.

Ear Nose and Throat was Dr MacGilly Cuddy then Dr Humphrey Mariner a very interesting man who was mad on railways and we always had to stop operating whilst the Pines Express came up through Blandford and in complete silence he would be able to tell us the number of the engine that was pulling the train that day. His garden at Westbourne backed down on to West Station and he watched trains all day long. He was followed by Dr McKenzie Ross and also a man from Salisbury.

Orthopaedics, Nick Vere Hodge and then John Wrighton an Olympic 400m runner.

Paediatrics, David Vulliamy and Richard Purvis.

Eye operations and outpatients by Mr Eric Bowes who mainly repaired squints.

Dermatology covered by Sammy Hall who could conduct his clinics in five languages.

One of the great advantages of the consultants visiting the hospital was that they had the opportunity to meet and discuss patients with GP’s.

CHAPTER IV

Administration

There seems little doubt that the nurses house which was the first inpatient hospital in Blandford in Salisbury Street was started about 1883 but there was very soon a feeling in the town and was warmly supported by the local doctors and thus donations and subscriptions were solicited and a meeting of donors and subscribers was held on the 1 November 1888 at the corner coffee house known later as The Salisbury Hotel. At that meeting a committee was elected. The Chairman was the Reverend J Penny, Honorary Treasurer and Vice Chairman was Mr R Lock and Honorary Secretary was Miss M Daniel. As we have already mentioned there is a commentary tablet to Mr Lock near the front door of the old hospital.

The hospital has been entirely funded by donations of subscriptions either from individuals or from Companies in Blandford who were able to give the hospital some money.

The matrons salary was £30.00 per year and the nurses £16.00 per year rising to £20.00. These figures were increased over the years and up until the Health Service started in 1948 local doctors and visiting consultants gave all their services entirely free. With rising costs however it became necessary to demand small fees from the patients. At some point in the 1930s the Blandford District Hospital League was founded and paid the costs of its members when they were in hospital. The hospital committee had a set of rules and an annual meeting was held of the donors and subscribers every February and to receive a report of the committee of management and the Honorary Treasurers Accounts for the past year and to fill up vacancies of the committee and to elect a Treasurer a Secretary and auditors for the coming year.

The hospital was to be managed by this committee consisting of twelve persons who shall be subscribers with the Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary with Honorary Medical Officers who shall be ex officio members. Four of the committee shall retire annually in rotation but shall be eligible for re-election. Members of the management committee shall at the first meeting elect a Chairman to avoid ties.
at their meetings. Also at the first meeting a house committee shall be elected consisting of three members of the management committee with the Treasurer and Secretary who shall meet from time to time and receive tenders for provisions, fuel, etc. To illustrate this a list in 1938 of the committee is illustrated below.

**THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL, BLANDFORD.**

**Founded by**

THE HON. L. E. PORTMAN AND THE VISCOUNTESS PORTMAN.

**Patroness**

FRANCES VISCOUNTESS PORTMAN.

**Patron**

CAPTAIN THE HON. GERALD PORTMAN.

**Committee 1938**

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Besides the Hospital League there was the Linen Guild which was responsible for all the bedding at the hospital, blankets and sheets, towels, etc. This was also funded by voluntary subscription and there was a party of ladies who used to meet regularly to repair the linen at the Hospital amongst whom were the Milton Abbas working party who also helped with the mending and which were greatly appreciated at the time.

The Hospital was run by this committee and this continued up until July 1948 when the Health Service started. In July 1948 the funds of the hospital were handed over to the State and the hospital had some very good Chairmen amongst whom was Dr Kenneth Wilson, Mr Geoffrey Swain and chiefly Sir Eric Beckett who was knighted for his services to the political arena. His asset to Blandford was that at one time the County Council were planning to put a by pass across the northern part of Blandford over the Crown Meadows and over the recreation ground very close to the Hospital. This would have been an absolute disaster for the hospital and it was due to Sir Eric’s good offices and his travelling to London to talk to Ministers that stopped it and for that reason we shall always be grateful.

Another kind Chairman was Geoffrey Swain and in his memory a fund was set up called the Swain Memorial Fund which is part of the League of Friends assets that is used for the further education of the nursing staff.

The Committee met at regular intervals and we have some of the minutes of these meetings. The hospital was used extensively and was run very smoothly under the secretarialship of Douglas Baker who was part time in Blandford but was mainly based at St Leonards Hospital. He was a fine musician and one of his greatest assets was that he played the piano for all the concerts at Christmas and at other times that were held at the hospital.

There were no major changes to the Health Service administration until 1973 when they did away with the hospital management committees. They formed region, area and district medical committees. Blandford chose to go to West Dorset rather than East Dorset so that we were mainly overlooked by Dorchester and not Poole. This was a good move because Dorchester was more rural orientated rather than the main accommodations of Bournemouth & Poole. The West Dorset Health Authority had under it a West Dorset Management Team which consisted of an administrator Mr Riiager, a chief nurse Mrs Cox, a finance officer and district medical officer, a consultant Mr James Mulliner, an anaesthetist and Gp, Dr Ian Wilson. This team worked extremely well and the District was run like clockwork. Their plan was that there should be a central district hospital surrounded by small community hospitals in Portland, Weymouth, Bridport, Shaftesbury Sherborne and Blandford. The only problem was where to put the central hospital and it was arguable between the site at Herrison and Dorchester. In the end the centre of Dorchester won.
only major change that was made was that they got rid of the area so we just had a region and then the District Health Authority which seemed a sensible approach. However, in 1989 the government announced yet a further radical change in the organisation of the Health Service and new titles and expressions were heard throughout the land. Trust, purchasers and providers, fund holding GPs and block Contracts to name but a few. There were to be Boards of Directors and members of the public became non executive directors and trusts were run by these people and developed. Blandford became part of West Dorset Community Health NHS Trust. These trusts have since been altered and Blandford became part of North Dorset Primary Care Trust. The hospital has changed again and is being looked after as the whole of Dorset Primary Care Trust excluding Bournemouth & Poole. These changes do not I think effect the care of patients which is the prime objective of everybody but I don’t think that it improves it one little bit nor does the new Contract for general practice help.

The hospital is indebted to Steve Cole who is the Chief Administrator and looks after all the Community Hospitals now in Dorset of which there are 11.

Bournemouth & East Dorset Hospital management committee had two secretaries who were both sympathetic to Blandford. The first was Commander Jackson whose daughter in law later became head of our new physiotherapy department in the Community Hospital. The other was Mr Criscuolo. Blandford House Committee had a representative of local Councillors two representatives from the Bournemouth & East Dorset Committee and a medical representative and they worked very well and the hospital ran very smoothly and was fully used and occupied until in 1973 the Health Service had its first of many reorganisations. At the same time two Green papers came out. One called the Seabohm Report and the other was the Salmon Report. The Seabohm Report took away the social services out of the health domain and it was the start of the Social Service empire. The Salmon Report affected the nursing staff. It removed matrons from hospitals and classified the nurses from letters from the alphabet according to their grading. I believe the disappearance of matrons lowered the general standard of cleanliness and discipline in hospitals and I am sure was a bad decision.

The reorganisation of the Health Service meant that there was a regional Health Authority an area Health Authority which meant the whole of Dorset was divided in an East and West District Health Authority. Blandford feeling that West Dorset was more rural orientated opted to go to come out of Bournemouth area and join West Dorset District based at Dorchester. This was a very wise decision and has affected the whole future of the hospital. The district had under it a management team which consisted of an administrator, a consultant a GP a nurse a finance officer and a district medic officer. This team was small, met regularly every week and was a great success and the Health Service was run I think probably better than before and since. It was the District Management team that decided the community hospital should be developed with a district central hospital and thus in 1982 Blandford Hospital was started to be built and the foundations were laid and finally opened in 1986 for the Princess Royal.

In 2006, after 20 years from her first visit, the Princess gratuiously paid a further visit to the hospital. This was another splendid occasion.
CHAPTER V

The Nurses

No history of a hospital can be written without recourse to the nursing staff. Nursing these days has evolved in so many ways. You have hospital nurses, community nurses, community midwives, school nurses, practice nurses and industrial nurses. Blandford Hospital is extremely fortunate in its nursing staff and in particular its matrons. Mrs Short was the first appointed matron in the nurses house and in the first years she admitted 46 patients to the Nurses Home. She moved to the new hospital and the salary was £30.00 per year and the nurses £16.00 per year. In 1901 Miss Alliston was appointed and retired in 1935 a period of 34 years. In 1935 Miss Agnes Verinder was appointed. She came to us from Guys Hospital and wore a Guys Hospital cap and gown during the whole of her service until 1957. She was an extraordinary person who I think brought the hospital up to new levels of excellence and it is right at this time that one should bring into this story the celebrations over Christmas which Miss Verinder introduced. Various groups were invited with those in hospital to sing Christmas Carols such as the Girl Guides and the Dorset 40 Red Cross detachment in Blandford Commandants were Miss Rita Woodhouse, Mrs Ian Wilson and lastly Dr Joan Davies. A stage was built at one end of women's ward. A Christmas concert was given over 2 or 3 evenings. Nurse Preston danced the hornpipe wearing bloomers made out of a union jack. Dr Oliver told his bible stories. On this day Miss Verinder always had the doctors and their families for a coffee in the morning with the children and the youngest had to ring a bell when Father Christmas arrived. Father Christmas was usually played by a member of staff notably Dr Kenneth Wilson, then Dr David Davies and recently Len Prill. The staff carved the turkeys on the various wards and Dr Wilson carved on Portman Ward for 40 years. The staff miss these old activities due to new regulations.

Whoever performed at the hospital was always extremely welcome by Miss Verinder and were filled up with home made mince pies and coffee or something stronger. Miss Verinder, followed by
Mrs Noble, Miss Hetherington and Mrs Rutter. Mrs Bennett started as matron but was renamed as Locality Manager.

**District Nurses**

The first annual report of the County House for Training cottage nurses in Blandford was published in 1893. Two years after the opening of the hospital in the report of the work of Dorset Health Association in the minutes it was divided into three departments. (1) Ambulance (2) sick nursing and (3) sanitary. The latter was taken over by Parish Council. The ambulances later by County. One of their first jobs was to set up a County home for training of cottage nurses. This home was under the management of the Blandford local nursing committee assisted by representatives of the Dorset Health Authority and the county technical committee. The Secretary was a Miss M Daniel of St Leonards and the first nurse was a Miss Haywood.

Blandford District Nursing Association continued from up until 1948 when the Health Service started. The committee was full of the notables of Blandford and examples are Mrs Greenwood, Mrs W H Wilson, Mrs Harold Woodhouse, Mrs Kenneth Wilson, Mrs Bodley Scott, Miss George, Mrs Pitt, The Reverend O’Burn, Mrs Ackroyd. Miss Castleman Smith of the Close House was secretary for 37 years and the success of Blandford nursing really is down to her organisation and discipline.

Queens Road, Kings Road and part of Milldown Road, The Milldown and part of Langton Road which meant it was too much for the Blandford nurse and application was made to Lady Portman to let the Bryanston nurse take over these new areas and this was agreed. Lady Portman was of course president of the Nursing Association for many years.

At this time the Nursing Association started to work hand in hand with the Blandford Hospital League and the Hospital League eventually supported the nurses association with occasional grants. The Hospital League is mentioned in the next chapter. We have been mentioning all the women who became a Blandford district nurse but one particular mention is Nurse Ward who was in Blandford for over 20 years and who had a frightening nature but a heart of gold and was much respected and loved by her patients. During Nurse Wards reign when she was off duty she was helped by nurses of the surrounding villages such as Miss Lomax and Miss Dunn in the Tarrant area and Mrs James, Charlton and Spetisbury. They were a splendid team. When Sister Ward retired Blandford was fortunate in having another good nurse in Sister Jarrett who kept up the very good work of Sister Ward and the traditions of the Blandford Nursing Association.

After a time it became necessary to house the two nurses and in 1921 the Nursing Association purchased a cottage at number 24 Bryanston Street for £388.8 shillings. Later 25 Bryanston Street was also purchased for the Bryanston nurse and that was bought for £689.10 shillings and tuppence. Blandford Nursing Association is a remarkably successful story and very much due to the worthy ladies who are on its committee and also very much to the secretary Ella G Castleman Smith for so many years. It continued to work until the 1960s when it ceased to exist. The monies from the sale of the two houses and from a few stocks and shares were formed into a new charitable fund for Blandford called The Blandford Aid and Sickness Fund and this was used to help people of the Blandford area with small aids to comfort in their homes from a nursing point of view and helping when they were ill. Eventually the Blandford Aid and Sickness Fund was handed over to the Friends of Blandford Hospital as their objects were very similar when the Hospital League branched out more
We have the original minute book of the Nursing Association and the cash book leading to the Aid and Sickness Fund in our possession. The cost of nursing of the Blandford Nursing Association was entirely met by voluntary contributions and occasional grants by various organisations such as the League and the Town Council. These were very small and it was mainly due to the public who kept the whole thing going. The reports of first of all the Dorset Health Association changed to the Blandford Nursing Association we retain the reports from 1895 up until the 1950s. These have been carefully preserved and if anyone wishes to see them they are available at the hospital.

HEALTH MINISTER AT BLANDFORD

Mr. Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health, with the Matron of Blandford Hospital (Mrs J. M. Hetherington), Alderman Philip Templeman (Chairman of the Wessex Regional Hospital Board) and Dr. Ian Wilson (medical officer and manager of the hospital) in the main lounge of Blandford Hospital during his visit on Wednesday.

Health Minister’s Visit

Farewell gifts to Nurse Parsons-Fox receiving a retirement gift of a hand-priser from Dr. Ian Wilson. Also in the picture is her husband.
Sister Lockyer & Nurses Preston, Fox, Crew and Acourt.

Carving the turkey Christmas 1960 on Portman Ward. Sister Lockyer, Canon Goodall and Mother Mary Tudor.

Sister Goodrum and Staff - Tarrant Ward
Carving the turkey on Portman Ward.
Sister Jennings, Doreen Prill and Matthew Holland - Paramedic.

Matron Hilary Baumberger and Father Xmas
CHAPTER VI

The Leagues

The urge to acquire a local hospital was felt in Blandford and was warmly supported by the local doctors so donations and subscriptions were solicited and a meeting of donors and subscribers was held on 1 November 1888 at the corner coffee house known later as The Salisbury Hotel. At that meeting the committee was elected, the Chairman was the Reverend J Penner, Hon Treasurer and Vice Chairman Mr R Lock and Hon Secretary Miss M Daniel. Until the arrival of the National Health Service Blandford Hospital was kept going purely by voluntary contributions. However with rising costs it soon became necessary to demand a small fee from the patients and at some point in the 1930s the Blandford & District Hospital League was founded and paid the costs of its members.

The setting may be a sequel to the Slate Clubs which had already been formed in various villages. In a Slate Club one became a member and paid an annual subscription and when you were sick or had to be off work then the Slate Club came to your help. Two very well known ones were at Charlton Marshall and in Tarrant Gunville. There came well known because if profits were made at the end of the season they held a village supper which was always a great occasion.

The Blandford & District Hospital League continued up until 1948 when the Health Service started and kept slowly increasing its prices and in 1938 for instance they were paying 4shillings a day for its membership an increase of one shilling. During the year the League paid a total of £51 for maintenance, xray, outpatients and massage and electrical treatment as well as giving a donation of £60 to the hospital. This state of affairs continued and it was helped by another organisation known as the Linen Guild. The Linen Guild was run by voluntary contributions and received help from places like the Catholic Needleworks Guild and the Milton Abbas Working Party for mending much of the linen and extraordinary work this Linen Guild did to keep the patients comfortable.

The Blandford & District Hospital League also gave money to the Blandford Nursing Association an annual addition to their funds was always much appreciated.

In July 1948 the Health Service started and all donations and subscriptions to the hospital ceased and the Blandford & District Hospital League was closed.

League of Friends

On the Tuesday, November 23, 1948 at 7.00pm a meeting was held in the Town Hall at Blandford to form a League of Friends for the Hospital. The chair was taken by the Viscount Portman. At that meeting Colonel Carrington Sykes who was living at Norden was elected Honorary Secretary. They decided to fix the minimum subscription at 1 shilling. It was hoped that supporters of the old Blandford Hospital League would join the League of Friends and its first object was as soon as possible to provide extras for the hospital and patients over Christmas and they hoped that they would raise £25-£30 for this purpose. From this day the League of Friends has continued gaining strength to strength every year. It has had several distinguished people as its Chairman or serving on the committee. Amongst whom the Portman family, the Viscount Portman, Michael Portman, Marjorie Portman, Rex Woodhouse, John Woodhouse and David Woodhouse and there has always been an association it would appear with the Brewery. Colin Kaille was a long serving past secretary of the Brewery and Frank Pike a Director of the Brewery has been serving on the League of Friends almost since it started and it still an extremely active and valuable member. The Treasurer was Ralph Ewbank who was manager of the National Provincial Bank and it was then taken over by Colonel Richard Taylor who was an amazing man and who ran the accounts in true military fashion and had to deliver and collect the boxes from various pubs even as far as ten miles away by walking and this was an amazing feat. Eventually Accountants Borton & Baker were involved and Tony Baker became Treasurer followed closely by Roland Ellis who was a past partner of this firm.

Income for the League of Friends came from members subscriptions which had gone up of course from the original 1 shilling from leaguers and their children to as many as £10. In addition there were events and souvenirs sold. Amongst these was a calendar every year which had different local people on it and this was very popular.
Sturminster Newton which bring in considerable sums every year. They also annually have one or two functions, particularly a dress show and also at least once a year an auction of object art and also some other things of quite considerable value are sold off. The person behind the auction, a dress show and the hospital which has an annual Christmas Fayre is Gordan Adam. His contribution to the Friends has been incredible. Another popular Chairman of the Friends was Geoffrey Swain who is remembered by a memorial fund which is used for the further education of the nursing staff.

It is impossible to state everything which the League of Friends has done for the Blandford Hospital but the list is considerable and the following are just a few examples. They were responsible for building the original sun lounge in memory of Michael Portman and Henry Spooner. Also they were totally responsible for building the physiotherapy room on the end of the gas cleansing unit at the back of the hospital. More recently moving from East to West the millennium garden, the families unit, the operating theatre, the hydrotherapy pool, the outpatient department, a reconfiguration of the minor injuries unit, the reception, improvement to the medical records department, the x-ray department and totally supplying the ultrasound equipment in that department, the snooze room and Langbourne Ward, reconfiguration of both the Langbourne Ward which is now called the Betty Highwood Unit because Mrs Highwood left a considerable sum of money to the League in her Will which was used for the Langbourne Ward so was named after her. Improvements to the day hospital and room for the new chapel. In the chapel is a beautifully carved table and chair in memory of Dr Kenneth Wilson and furniture on the table was supplied in memory of Douglas Girling ex headmaster of Park Road Academy. Recently the League of Friends has branched into the community and it is called the Friends and Practice Scheme an has been a great success. They are also responsible for reconfiguration of the Milldown Unit and helped toward osteoporosis source centre and many other activities. Also instruments, particularly for endoscopy are supplied for orthopaedic and general surgery. It can be seen that the League of Friends spent a considerable amount of money in improving the Blan Hospital which really is now a Community hospital and is equipped than most hospitals of its equivalent size in the UK. Money raised to do all this work has come from local people this is how it should be and long may it last.

*Sun Lounge*

Baroness Miller of Hendon MBE Chairman of the National Association Lea, Friends and Dr Ian Wilson MBE President of Blandford League of Friends cut the 50th Anniversary Cake
Money raised from Trustees of Telethon towards a family care unit raised by Hall & Woodhouse. L to R: David Woodhouse, Col Taylor, Mrs Rutter and a representative of Telethon.

Having already raised a staggering £766 from sponsorship in the annual Shillingstone Blandford Raft Race, signallers from the Royal School of Signals based at Blandford surprised the organisers when they presented a further £75 charity voucher to swell total to £841. The money raised was mainly from the Defence Industry who sponsored raft “Jimmy’s Jewel” in the event which took place in 1988. Col F K Pike, Chairman of the League of Friends of Blandford Hospital (holding cheque) accompanied Col R O T. Treasurer (right) at a special presentation from left to right: Staff Sgt Alexander, Nicholas Thompson, Cpl Roger Philip (presenting cheque).
Friends of Blandford Community Hospital

Golden Jubilee Dinner
1948 to 1998

50 Years supporting our local Healthcare Services

Patron
The Viscount Portman

President
Dr D.I.T. Wilson MBE

Chairman
P. Fale Esq M.A.

The Crown Hotel
Blandford Forum

Friday
20th November 1998.

CHAPTER VII

Bits and Pieces

It is not possible to mention everything the hospital does but further mention is needed of the physiotherapy unit which started as one room on the edge of the women's ward one small room and Mrs Pat Robertson, an Australian lady was the first physio, followed close by Mrs Diana Bosey and now with a new fully equipped departme with hydrotherapy pool. It was opened by Mrs Jackson who was the daughter in law of Commander Jackson originally secretary of the Bournemouth Hospital Management Committee. Now in the capable hands of Mrs Brown.

The occupational therapy department, the x ray department which started as one mobile Phillips machine and we now have a full fo valve set capable of virtually doing anything that is required and
In the hydrotherapy pool Senior Physiotherapist Alison Brown and a patient Mr Peter Steele watched by Gen R Keightley, Chairman of West Dorset Health Authority, Mrs Margery Portman, President of the League of Friends, Dr Helliwell - Rheumatologist, Mrs Peggy Walley, and Gerald Trickey, Hall & Woodhouse.

that department is the ultrasound machine fully paid for by the League of Friends.

The hospital also has a very well equipped kitchen possibly bigger than was required by the Hospital but was built in mind with possible national emergencies.

Lastly at the back of the hospital is the mortuary and last to that is the boiler room and beyond that the hospital car park. Blandford Hospital is now a true community hospital serving Blandford and district and has come a long way since the nurses room in Salisbury Street and with the League of Friends full involvement in the hospital I am sure will continue and improve.
Dear Sir,

Your letter dated the 19th instant was read to the Guardians and the Rural District Council at their meeting held on the 20th and I was directed to inform you in reply that you were appointed by the Guardians to act as Temporary Medical Officer of the No. 1 District of the Union with a salary at the rate of £110 per annum and a house at the rate of £22 per annum and as Temporary Extraordinary of the No. 1 District with the usual fees and to the Rural District Council as Temporary Medical Superintendent of the Dedication Hospital with a salary at the rate of £30 per annum.

All the above appointments are to commence as from the 1st May 1937 and to terminate on the 30th June next.

Yours faithfully,

W. Haskell Short

[Signature]

To the Guardians

St. Kenneth, 7th Wilson

Eagle House

Blandford
Blandford Cottage Hospital.

THE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of Subscribers and Friends

will be held in

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER (TOWN HALL) BLANDFORD

(by kind permission of the Mayor, Alderman R. C. Hunt)

on

Monday, 8th March, 1948, at 3 o'clock p.m.

MR. F. D. WOODHOUSE will kindly preside.

The presence of Subscribers and Friends will be

heartily welcomed.

AGENDA

To confirm the Minutes.
To receive the Report.
To elect Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary.
To re-elect retiring members of the Committee.
To appoint Auditors.
To pass a vote of thanks to the Hon. Medical Officers
and the Hon. Dental Surgeons.
To pass a vote of thanks to the Matron and Nurses.

The retiring members of the Committee are:

Mr. F. D. Woodhouse
Mr. H. R. Tate
Mrs. Leslie-Melville
Dr. L. Scott

who offer themselves for re-election.

FIFTY YEARS ON

Blandford Cottage Hospital.

A

PUBLIC MEETING

will be held at

THE TOWN HALL

BLANDFORD

(by kind permission of the Mayor, Alderman R. C. Hunt)

Tuesday, November 23rd, 1948

AT 7 P.M.

TO FORM

“A LEAGUE OF FRIENDS”

FOR THE HOSPITAL

It is hoped that all friends of the Hospital will attend.

Friends of Blandford Hospital

The Friends are having a Golden Jubilee Dinner at the Crown Hotel on Friday 20
November 1948 to mark and celebrate their achievement of 50 years' support to Blandford
Hospital and the local community. Healthcare Service.

They will be delighted if you are able to join the party. Applications for tickets to the
Friends Office, Blandford Cottage Hospital, Milldown Road, Blandford DT11 7DD;
Tel 01258 450095

Pick-up
Reception 7.30 p.m.

Price £2.00 cheques payable
To the Friends of Blandford
Community Hospital
To all to whom these Presents shall come

In the Name of the Right Honourable William Henry
Blickley Viscount Selbyman (bearing the name
Viscount Selby) and of his

It is hereby declared that the said sum of One Thousand
Eight Hundred Pounds, together with interest thereon,
shall be held in trust for the following purposes:

1. To be used for the benefit of the said

2. To be used for the benefit of

3. To be used for the benefit of

Deed Cover
And Whereas the said Guardians, at a Meeting of their Board, held on the

30th of 

July, 1922, did duly appoint to be the Medical Officer of the said District

the said

John Saltot Wilson

being a person duly qualified for the said office, at the Salary and remuneration hereinafter

mentioned.

And Whereas the said Guardians, at a Meeting of their Board, held on the

30th of 

June 1922, did duly appoint to be the Medical Officer of the said District

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the said

John Saltot Wilson

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mentioned.
Dear Dr. Wilson,

Blandford Isolation Hospital,
Appointment of Medical Superintendent

As the Ministry of Health has informed the Council that they will no longer be financially responsible for the above hospital, the Council are compelled to close it with effect from the 1st proximo.

It is therefore with regret that I have to give you one month's notice as from 1st March to terminate your appointment.

I am sure that the Council will at their next meeting place on record the valuable service you have rendered to the District during the many years that you have been Medical Superintendent, and I should like to add my own appreciation to the above.

Yours faithfully,

Clerk of the Council.

Dr. Kennet J.T. Wilson,
Brethry,
White-cliff-mill-street,
Blandford.
The following documents are important and should be preserved. They are in a steel case marked "K.J.T. WILSON" and are stored in the Hospital.

CASH BOOKS 1888-1948

BLANDFORD AND DISTRICT NURSING ASSOCIATION 1893-1955

REPORT OF HOSPITAL COMMITTEE 1938-1946-1947-1948

MINUTES OF LEAGUE OF FRIENDS 1948-1975

PLAN OF NEW PHYSIO DEPT 1966

REPORTS OF HOSPITAL COMMITTEE MEETING 1936-1948

HISTORY OF YEATMAN HOSPITAL

DEED POLL FOR BEDS BY VISCOUNT AND VISCOUNTESS PORTMAN

CONTRACTS AND DISMISSAL OF DR K WILSON WITH ISOLATION HOSPITAL

LETTER FROM JOHN TORY

PICTURES OF PORTMAN FAMILY

MINUTES AND LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT TO HOSPITAL HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE

NUMEROUS PHOTOGRAPHS IN ALBUM