

THE SYDNEY HOSPITAL. EPISODE 2.

As I said in my last story of this great Hospital not much would change until 1868 but we will go back to 1855 and Miss Florence Nightingale in far away England was making changes to how Nurses were playing a bigger role in the Hospitals of the world.

In NSW we had a new Premier, Henry Parkes, who believed that the NSW Hospital should be run by the Government –not by local Charities.

Henry had heard about Miss Florence Nightingale and he liked to write to ladies who were interesting. He would develop a lifelong friendship with Florence and he asked her to send some of her trained Nurses to NSW and take over his Hospital.

In England in 1855, ***The Nightingale Fund*** had been set up and by 1860, £50,000 had been raised and ***The Nightingale School for Nurses*** had been started at ***St. Thomas's Hospital in London.***

This fund would pay the Nurses wages, board, lodging and all of their training fees.

Henry Parke's letter would result in Miss Lucy Osburn and five trained Nurses setting sail for Sydney Town aboard ***The Dunbar Castle.***

Lucy's job description was as follows;

The Lady Superintendent is to have the entire responsibility for all Nursing, including both Nurses and Wards men. She has the management of all the Wards. She is to establish a Training School for Nurses. She is responsible to the Medical Officer to see that his orders are carried out. She is responsible to the Governors for the

conduct and the training of the Nurses. She is responsible for the diets, medicines and dressings as well as the care of the linen and the bedding.

Lucy had only just begun to clean up the Hospital when on 12 March 1868, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh and son of Queen Victoria was having a Royal Visit to NSW

He was at a function at Clontarf when an Irishman, James O'Farrell, shot and wounded him.

As the Sydney Hospital was considered to be unsuitable to care for such a Royal person he was taken to Government House and was cared for by Lucy and her Nurses.

The Prince made a full recovery and Lucy would send a full report to Miss Florence Nightingale.

This incidence caused the outraged NSW Public to demand that a new Hospital be built to handle such emergencies and a large amount of money was raised.

Today we have *The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital* in Sydney.

Henry Parkes passed The Sydney Hospital Act in 1871 and this would result in many improvements being made to Sydney Hospital.

By the time that Lucy Osburn returned to Britain in 1885 many Nurses had been trained at Sydney Hospital and many would serve at many of the new Hospitals that would be built in Country areas of Australia.

One even went to England and would become the matron of a Major Hospital there.

Lucy Osburn deserves the highest praise for her good works. She was tireless in her efforts to see that Australian Hospitals were staffed with well trained Nurses.

Henry Parkes gave her a Gold Railway Pass to enable her to travel to all Hospitals where her Nurses were serving to help and advise them

She returned to London in 1885 and in 1886 Queen Victoria gave £70,000 to support District Nursing in Britain and Lucy Osburn was appointed as Superintendent. She was also appointed as one of the Queen's Nurses.

Lucy died on 22 December 1891 after a long and brilliant career. The NSW newspapers wrote glowing reports about her. In Sydney Hospital there is a fine brass plaque;

A tribute of love to a memory of a dear friend, Lucy Osburn.

Pioneer of Trained Nurses in NS.

Lady Superintendent of the Sydney Hospital from March 1868 to October 1884.

Died in England nursing the sick and the poor of London.

Lucy Osburn will always be remembered with love and respect by all Nurses and the Public in NSW.

Lucy's Nurses served at the *Quarantine Station at North Head* and the *Infectious Disease's Hospital at Little Bay* which would be renamed *The Prince Henry Hospital* after a visit by the Duke of Gloucester in 1934

The new *Prince Alfred Hospital* opened in 1882 with 146 patients and soon had 1,000 beds. Today it is one of the top Hospitals in the World. Sydney Hospital continued to train Nurses and in 1887 many changes were made. There was now a two year training period and a Certificate was given to those who passed an Exam.

In 1894 there were many more changes and it was time to replace the old wooden buildings with stone and brick. There was a Steam Laundry, a new Kitchen and new Nurses Quarters.

There was now a Matron, a Senior Sister, 13 Sisters, 55 Nurses and 14 Probationers. The Nurses had come a long way.

Many Nurses would serve in the Boer War and the Great War of 1914-18. *Miles Franklin* was a Nurse there for some time until Henry Lawson read her manuscript of *My Brilliant Career* and she decided to become a Writer.

Miles wrote a article for *The New Idea* about Matron Creal.

Matron entered, regal as a Queen in her snowy white uniform. We all rose and stood as she took her seat behind her desk. Matron read a little from the Bible and said a Prayer, confirming the impression it being impossible for her to do anything other than well.

1901 saw a Royal Visit to Sydney Hospital by the Duke and Duchess of York who would later become the King and Queen. They opened the new Surgical Wing which would become equal to any in the Southern Hemisphere.

In 1906 the number of years for Training Nurses was increased to four and Nursing numbers were increased so that;

This will allow the Nursing Staff to have 24 hours off duty each week.

The Sydney Hospital Nurses would serve with great distinction in the 1939-45 War.

In 1985 the last Nurses were to graduate from the Sydney Hospital.

So closed an era in the history of this great Teaching Hospital and today we have University Trained Nurses. The population of Sydney has moved Westward and there are several new Teaching Hospitals in the Western Suburbs.

It was suggested that Sydney Hospital should close but wiser heads prevailed.

Sydney Hospital has come a long way from the days of the old Rum Hospital and may become a museum. Who Knows?

We should all pause now and then to hear about its wonderful History and remember the fine, dedicated people who have made it, from a collection of tents and slab huts in a Penal Colony, to one of the great Teaching Hospitals in the World.

I wish to once again, *Say Thank You* to U3A Member, Val Griffiths for her wonderful book, *Caps and Veils* which tells the story of *Sydney Hospital* and all the *wonderful Nurses*.

(John Imrie, July 2020)