

Whipps Cross Hospital (Part 2)

Mainly A Time Line Of Change

From 1950, in the second fifty years of Whipps Cross Hospital history, there were very many changes made to the hospital and grounds.

In November 1955, the Hospital had 974 general medical and surgical beds. Nightingale Ward was opened as an additional surgical ward. A new Medical Records Department was set up in C.2 Ward and Wards D.5 and D.6 were converted into a new Physiotherapy Department at a cost of £320.



Left: The main entrance from Whipps Cross Road



Right: The Porter's Lodge

A new entrance to the Hospital was built, at a cost of £2,030, and the old waiting room made into a Porter's Lodge. A new deep well water pump, which could pump 6,000 gallons an hour, was installed for £680.

Repairs, Renovation Upgrades & Improvements

The main operating theatre was redecorated, a new floor was laid and new sterilizing equipment installed for £320. Some £1,680 was spent on various lights and £830 on re-roofing the new ward blocks with asphalt. The X-ray darkroom was divided into two darkrooms at a cost of £500. An office for the Pharmacy was created for £110.

The Wilfred Lawson Preliminary Training School was fenced off for £156 to

provide privacy for the resident nursing staff. The hall and classroom were redecorated for £475.

Costs of Care Increase

In 1956 the weekly cost of an in-patient was £20 16s 10d (£20.84), compared with £19 4s 0d (£19.20) the previous year - an increase of 8.5%.

C.5 Ward was adapted at a cost of £2,450 for the treatment of patients with rheumatism and non-tuberculous chest conditions.

A New Out Patients Facility & Ambulance Station



Essex County Council purchased three-quarters of an acre of land adjacent to James Lane in order to build a modern Ambulance Station.

An Out-Patients Department belatedly opened, in 1958.

In October 1959 the Sub-Regional Ophthalmic Unit opened. It contained a male and female ward of 12 beds each and a 6-bedded ward for children, and a compact ophthalmic operating theatre.

Parking Facilities



In 2013 virtually every empty space in the hospital grounds have been overtaken by cars parking

By the end of the 1950's, because of the ever-increasing number of visitors' cars, the Hospital Management Committee decided to cease offering parking facilities for visitors within the Hospital grounds. During visiting time, the roadways would be choked with vehicles and emergency ambulances were unable to get through.

In the last few months, as a result of the exorbitant cost of hospital parking, hospitals have been instructed to re-evaluate parking costs.

In 1962 the original mansion, *Forest House*, which had been used as a ward for male mental patients, closed when the newly built Samuel Boyce Lodge opened in its gardens. (The mansion was demolished two years later. Its site later became a car park.)

In 1963, the Hospital had 978 beds. Overall control of the hospital was transferred to the Forest Group Hospital Management Committee.

A Medical Education Centre, ICU & Hyperbaric Unit

In 1965, a Medical Education Centre opened. It was one of the first in England.

In 1968, an Intensive Care Unit and Hyperbaric Unit opened.



Above: The present day hyperbaric chamber and technician

Whipps Cross Radio

In their own words and from their website:

"Whipps Cross Hospital Radio is a self-financing registered Charity run entirely by volunteers and we have to raise all our own income.

A very primitive radio service had been run for a short time by the Whipps Cross League of Friends in the early 1960s. There was no studio, just a microphone and amplifier - and probably no listeners.

Left: Whipps Cross Hospital Radio Volunteers With Long Service Certificates

The idea for a more permanent service came from the Walthamstow Lions Club in 1969 and an old, leaky garden shed was set up in the grounds and wired with home made equipment as a studio. With funding from the Lions, the station and six volunteers broadcast for just three hours on a Sunday evening.

In 1970 a second hut was grafted onto the first one to provide room for expansion but it was to be some years before the new facility was finally on air. A nightly local news programme was part of the new schedule, which by 1971 had grown firstly to three evenings and then to five evenings a week.

In July 1974 there was a damaging disagreement amongst Lions officials over how the station should be run and the founding member Ivor Gilbert left. However, the new studio was finally commissioned and the service got back on its feet again.

The hospital radio mobile disco was established as a fund raiser in 1976 and proved to be very successful. The radio service itself was extended by landline to Chingford Hospital and then to Wanstead Hospital (both now closed), and broadcasting hours rose to 40 hours a week. In 1980 a line was connected to Leyton Orient and regular football commentary started.

The station broke links with the Lions Club in November 1982 and became a registered charity in its own right and from this point was self-sufficient. Due to a shortage of money the service to Chingford was reluctantly closed as the hospital became a geriatric unit.



Annual 'marathon' drives around Britain were started to raise funds and the profile of the station. A plan to move to more solid studios in the basement of the hospital was agreed and a full-blown fundraising campaign was launched. The move eventually took place in July 1991 and two professionally built studios came online under D block in the main hospital. Just a few months later Wanstead Hospital closed and the station reverted to serving just one hospital.

Awards followed for the station and gradually technical facilities were improved further and programmes were expanded. In 1998 the first of two Restricted Service Licences were bought for a one month period of broadcasting on FM with adverts and a 24-hour schedule.

By the new millennium there were 50 members and two years later a computer playout system was purchased with a lottery grant to enable 24-hour broadcasting. Patientline arrived in 2004 with bedside tv and radio units and although there was talk of the entire hospital being demolished and rebuilt, it has not happened yet!

In 2009 the station marked its 40th anniversary, it had come a long way since 1969. "

The Whipps Cross League Of Friends

Is a community charitable fundraising charity for Whipps Cross



University Hospital and has been raising funds for the hospital for more than 60 years. In that period is thought to have raised millions of pounds for the hospital since it was founded nearly 60 years ago.

The aim of the charity is to provide resources to help Whipps Cross Hospital achieve a standard of excellence for its patients. It raises money and allocates funds for medical and non-medical purposes, with the patients' improved health, care and comfort as a priority.

In 1984 the league held its first fund-raising car boot sale, which today remains its main source of revenue, along with donations and legacies.

Other fund-raising activities over the years have included coffee mornings, quiz nights and collections at supermarkets. But its main fund-raising and activity remains its car boot sales, which are held on the first Saturday of every month at the hospital's car park between March and November.

One annual event the club organises is the donation of presents to elderly people at the hospital during Christmas time. In December 2012 the group wrapped and delivered more than 160 parcels.

Presently there are twelve volunteer Committee members and during 2012-13 the League of Friends has approved the following purchases to help local people have improved standards of medical care:

- A defibrillator for the Eye Treatment Centre, cost £5,285
- Two shower chairs for Wavell and Peace Wards, cost £3,240
- An ultra sound fibroscan for the Gastroenterology Department, cost £17, 500
- An electric saw for the Outpatients' Plaster Department, cost £1,881.50
- A 24 hour monitor for the Cardiac Unit, cost £2,402.50
- Four TV sets for the Special Care Parents and Baby Unit, cost £1,000
- Trainee nurses' bursaries to encourage excellence in practice, cost £2,050
- Christmas gifts for the elderly in hospital, cost £1,000

A Maternity Wing

In 1973, a Maternity Wing opened.



Above Left: The Maternity Unit



Above Right: Maternity Ward

In 1974, following a major reorganisation of the NHS, the Hospital came under the

control of the West Roding District Health Authority, part of the Redbridge and Waltham Forest Area Health Authority of the North East Thames Regional Health Authority. It had 862 beds. The Medical Education Centre was extended the same year.

By 1976, the Hospital had 960 beds and, by 1978, 940, mainly for acute patients.

A Change In Administration

In 1982, after another major reorganisation of the NHS, the Hospital came under the administration of the Waltham Forest District Health Authority.

In 1987, the Margaret Centre opened to provide palliative care for patients with life-limiting illnesses.



In 1992, the hospital became the Forest Healthcare NHS Trust.

In 1995, the Plane Tree Centre opened for the provision of day surgery.



Above: The bridge joining the 'old' hospital to the Outpatients part of the Plane Tree Centre

Financial Crisis

For ordinary mortals, particularly those of us who rejoiced at the creation of the National Health Service in 1948, the concept of Britain not being able to afford medical care for all of its people is an alien concept. If the Government can print money to bale out banks and financial institutions as it did in 2008, in a process known as 'Quantitative Easing', why can't it do this for hospitals?.

In 1997, we learnt that the Hospital was in deep financial crisis, with a deficit of £4m. The long waits in the Accident & Emergency Department for patients on trolleys, cancelled operations and neglect of elderly patients on wards placed it as the second worst in the whole country for complaints (it is not stated which was the first).

New Management

In 2001, the Forest Healthcare NHS Trust was dissolved and the Hospital came under the management of the Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust with teaching links to The South Bank University in London.

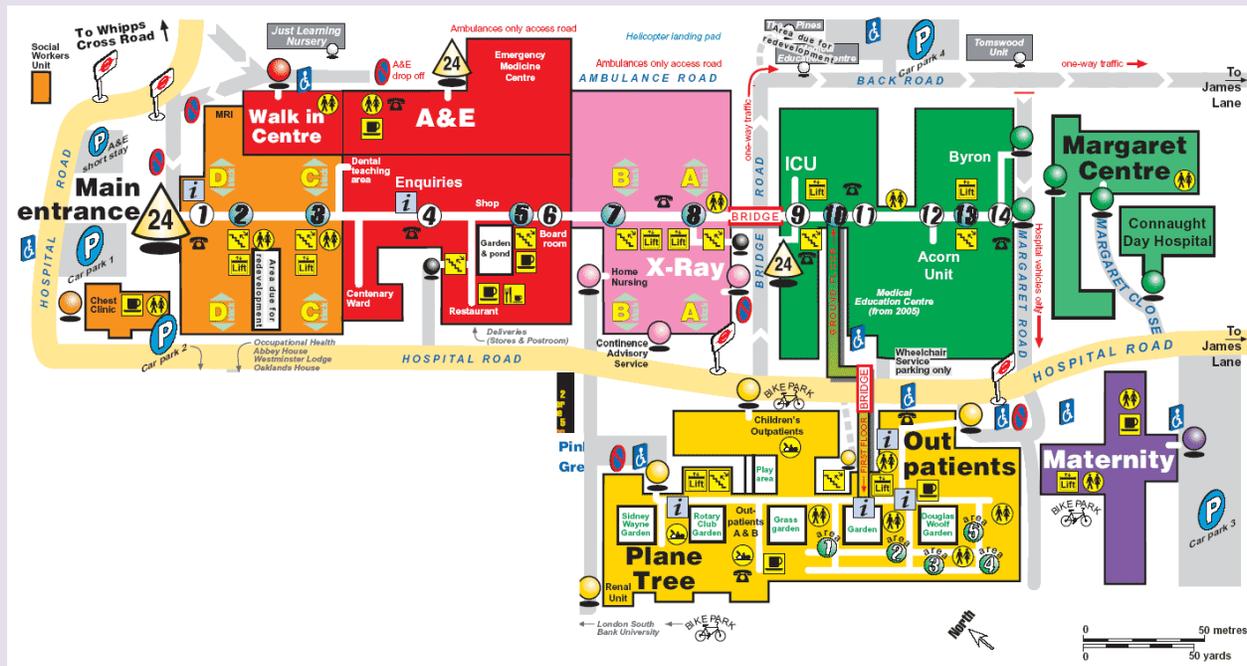
Nurse Gertie, The 'Old Lady' Of Whipps Cross



In 2003 there were celebrations to mark the 100th birthday of Nurse Gertie, the 'old lady of Whipps Cross'. She has stood proudly over two world wars and the many changes in the area.

In 2003, a new Emergency Medical Centre was opened.

A Complete Rebuild Or Carry On Tinkering ?



By now it was painfully obvious that the hospital had been developed scheme piecemeal for the last fifty years and sprawled higgledy-piggledy over the entire site. Although the main hospital block is a listed building, most of the other buildings are simply old, many more than 60 years old; they are expensive to maintain and run and they would be difficult to modernise. A complete rebuild of the site was proposed under a Private Finance Initiative, but the plan hit difficulties with tendering and was cancelled.

In 2004 work began on a new power centre next to James Lane.

Another Serious Financial Crisis (Why Didn't They Solve The Last One ?)

In May 2006 there was a proposal by Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust (WFPCT) to cut £1- 1.5 Million from the community nursing budget. This was because the

Primary Care Trust was in serious financial deficit and faced a second top slice in its current budget and needed to make further savings in the next financial year. The effect of this would have reduced Health Visitors by 40% and District Nurses by 20%.

Public Opposition Saves (Temporarily) The Hospital



As a result of opposition from the public, local MPs and the local authority, the Primary Care Trust withdrew that proposal in July 2006. Since that time, posts for qualified nurses in health visiting and district nursing have been frozen and vacancies unfilled.

In September 2010 the Medical Day Centre was renamed the Woodlands Day Unit to fit in with the ward names, most now named after plants and trees (although the children's ward is named Acorn).

The Connaught Day Centre Rerieved

In October 2011 the Connaught Day Centre, a specialist unit for the elderly, was given a reprieve from closure.

Work began in 2011 at the northern part of the site for a new £23m Emergency and Urgent Care Centre, which opened in May 2012. The building incorporates the former Accident and Emergency Department and the Walk-In Centre.

Because of the continuing financial problems and uncertainties over its future, a scheme for



redevelopment of the site intended to begin in 2012 was abandoned. Instead, early in 2011, the Trust negotiated with the Barts and the London NHS Trust and the Newham University Hospital NHS Trust to merge and create a new trust.

In 2012, the mergers were successful and the Barts Health NHS Trust came into being and is the largest NHS Trust in the country

The 2012 Olympics were held nearby at Stratford and appropriately nurses from the hospital took part in the Opening ceremony.



Above: A scene from the Olympic opening ceremony with Whipps Cross nurses back-stage on the right

Afterwords

British healthcare is in a mess. Since the introduction of the 1948 National Health Service, it has grown haphazardly in fits and starts depending upon the political complexion of prevailing governments. Where once there were many small cottage hospitals serving local communities, there are now a few mega hospitals like Whipps Cross that try to serve the needs of much larger catchment areas.

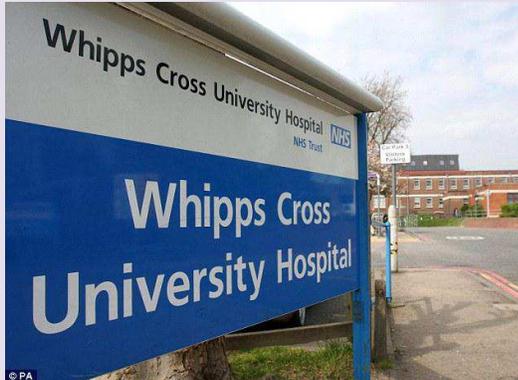
The hospital serves a diverse local population of more than 350,000 people from Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Epping Forest and further afield. The catchment area has a wide variation in levels of deprivation and health needs, ranging from the most deprived five per cent to amongst the most affluent 30 per cent of electoral wards in England. The Trust had a turnover of £244million in 2010/11 and currently employs 3,400 staff.

Existing Services Provided By Whipps Cross Hospital

Whipps Cross provides a full range of general inpatient, outpatient and day case services, as well as maternity services and a 24-hour Emergency Department and Urgent Care Centre. The Trust has also built a strong reputation as a centre of

excellence for various specialist services, including urology, ENT, audiology, cardiology, colorectal surgery, cancer care and acute stroke care. Many of these services are provided to local people who would otherwise need to travel further to access them.

Fit For The Future?



The present thinking on healthcare provision is that health care provided by large hospitals like Whipps Cross is difficult to access, too expensive and not necessarily the best way of providing good health care. The preferred care option is for a group of GP's based at local health centres to carry out many of the functions that are now provided by hospitals like Whipps Cross. e.g. Minor operations, clinics, blood taking etc. The Government's view

is laid out in the document *'Fit For The Future'*

A crucial part of the *'Fit for the Future'* document includes proposals for many of the services currently provided at Whipps Cross Hospital to be provided in the wider community.

The perspective on the ground in community health services, is that the Out of Hospital Services are vastly inadequate for this purpose both at present and in the near future. The reality is that existing community health services are being squeezed. It is not clear how new services which could safely substitute for specialist consultant departments could possibly be developed, particularly by primary care trusts that are in financial deficit.

'Fit for the Future' looks at Waltham Forest and Redbridge Primary Care Trusts delivering services from Whipps Cross and King George hospitals to residents living in the south of Epping Forest District.

The five pre-consultation options include leaving King George and Whipps Cross as they are. Other options propose either King George or Whipps Cross becoming an emergency-focused hospital while the other becomes `elective` -focused with a midwife led birthing centre, planned ambulatory services and an urgent care centre for minor ailments and injuries.

Other alternatives envisage either Whipps Cross or King George as a full district general hospital with the other fulfilling a `Community Hospital` role with an ambulatory care centre including outpatients, day care and diagnostics plus a primary care led urgent care centre for minor ailments and injuries, a birth centre and intermediate care provision.

Each option includes an Independent Sector Treatment Centre (ISTC) at King George Hospital.

A Stand Off

The successful campaign by hospital staff and the public to oppose taking services away from Whipps Cross and making St George Hospital at Ilford the primary care provider has led to the maintenance of the status quo at Whipps Cross Hospital. However, it hasn't solved the problem of how health services should be provided in the future.

This year, the public were shocked at the revelations of ill treatment of vulnerable patients by three hospital staff. In 2013, the group of six hospital run by the Barts Healthcare



Trust that includes Whipps Cross Hospital was ranked the second worst in England following a survey of cancer patients by Charity Macmillan Cancer Support, who analysed data from the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey, which gathered views on treatment and service

There is also a shortage of GP's and nurses. The GP system is overstretched and sick people unable to access their GP's are going to hospital A & E departments in order to get treatment. This situation causes even more strain on hospital resources and is expected to worsen as the number of GP's retiring will not be matched by the numbers of incoming new GP's. Britain is again scouring the world to find desperately needed trained nurses to meet the shortfall.

The Barts Healthcare Trust is crippled by a millstone of the debts incurred by the rebuilding costs of the London Hospital and Barts Hospitals

Bill Bayliss

October 2014

Addenda

WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL 1986.

Whipps Cross Hospital has probably got the longest main corridor in the country. It was opened in 1895. Total Area is approx. 37 acres.

It has 2000 members of staff but not all of them work at the same time. 200 to 250 work at night.

The hospital has its own kitchens; one main and a small one for each ward. There are 37 wards.

The hospital costs £17,000,000 to run each year.

Other Statistics:

In Patients 825

Out Patients 135,000 per year

Accidents 100,000 per year

Deaths and Discharges 35,000 per year

Record Cards stored 500,000

Future by the year 2000 3 new blocks

1st phase beginning soon at an estimated cost of £9 million.

Addenda

A Nurse's Story

From Kerry to Whipps Cross: Training to be a Nurse in Post-War London

Contributed by: **Bernadette McGrath** 1947 - 2004

I came to the East End of London to train as a nurse in 1947. The contrast between West Kerry with its spectacular views and the war torn East End could not have been more diverse. I was the second eldest of six children and always wanted to be a nurse. I grew up on a farm where all work was either manual or horse power, the latter being the common mode of transport also. Coming from a close knit family and community where almost everyone was related, saying goodbye was an ordeal. My youngest sister was nine years old and to this day talks of how she cried for a whole week non stop. The area had already been depleted of its youth through mass

recruitment from English firms and hospitals during and after the war. However London was near as opposed to where some of my ancestors and neighbours had gone, to all corners of the globe never to return.

Moving here was not only a change of culture, it was also a change of language. Gaelic was compulsory at all levels of education, and even in the homes at first, but I was always bilingual. Travelling from West Kerry to London took 24 hours if the journey was not broken, the boat was hazardous, passengers and cattle in the same boat at times. Arriving in Euston Station I was fortunate to meet a young lady who took me to Whipps Cross Hospital. Everybody was friendly and helpful. The gate porter said "Welcome duckie" and took me to the nurses home. I was awestruck by the size of the hospital which had a thousand beds, and a straight corridor reputed to be a quarter of a mile long.

The home sister welcomed and showed me my room, then told me to go to tea in an hours time. Discipline commenced immediately. Tea was bread and jam. After tea I returned to the home sister, by which time more student nurses had arrived. Half of the group of 18 were Irish, three of the English had been through the war, and one was from Nigeria. We were all there for the Preliminary Training School which commenced next morning, and would be for three months. Failing two of the weekly exams in succession, having an affair with a member of the staff, smoking in uniform, and one of the patients in your care getting a bed sore, eliminated you from nursing there.

The first morning in class was a shock. We were already rigged out in white starched uniforms and caps, and given the books we had to study from, for which we had to pay. The principle tutor stood beside a hanging skeleton, and in front of a table with a box of bones, which rattled when moved onto a desk. Then after being addressed as nurses she marched us all off to the hospital chapel where we prayed for God's blessing in our work and sang "All creatures great and small". This was more than a surprise to me as my parish priest referred to England in terms of being pagan.



Lectures were in the morning after prayers, and practical work in the afternoons. There was very little time for homesickness, as we were driven as though there was no tomorrow. The majority of the staff were Irish, including the matron, and assistant matron. The working week was 48 hours, no pay for overtime or time off in lieu. The pay was three pounds a month, with full board and free training. With the pay packet came a coupon for a slice of bacon and an egg. This was very welcome as food was rationed, the stable diet being mostly potatoes, bread and custard. At the end of the three months in the Preliminary Training School, we were taken for a tour and high tea at the House of Commons by the local M.P. and to Mayer and Baker drug factory another day and shown how drugs were manufactured. I qualified in three years and Mrs Clement Atlee, the Prime Minister's wife, presented the certificates.



I then went on to train as a midwife in the Whittington Hospital, Bushey Maternity, and did district training in Burnt Oak. I qualified as a midwife, did some private work but returned to the Whittington Hospital to practice as a midwife. I left the Whittington after two years, and practiced in a nursing home for another year. I got married and went as a midwife to Holloway Prison Hospital for nearly another year. I retired, had five children, four survived, and would have remained retired but in the early sixties I got a letter from the Minister of Health, Anthony Barber, asking me to return to work as a midwife to any of the local hospitals. The

Whittington was so busy with the "baby boom" that I was allowed to work any free time I had. This I did until the invention of the pill in the late sixties, when there was a big drop in the birth rate nine months later. I was then asked to work in the new Intensive Care Premature Baby Unit there, which I did part time in regular hours while my children were at school. After three years I left, went back to general nursing, working in neurology, allergy research, and various other agency jobs until I retired at 70.

This story was collected as part of a joint project between the London Irish Centre (Camden, London) and Moving Here in January-February 2004. For more information about the London Irish Centre, go to www.irishcentre.org.

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