

Celebrating 100 years of Haslemere & District Hospital

1923 – 2023



Hospital 1923



Nursing Staff 1923



Nursing Staff 2023

Introduction

In the beginning – the first 100 years

The Cottage Hospital movement, was designed to bring the benefits of hospital treatment to rural areas where it was otherwise unobtainable began in the year 1859 with the establishment of Cranleigh Cottage Hospital in Surrey.

In Haslemere there is documented evidence and history of Health care happening dating back to the 1600s but it was fragmented and voluntary given by local Physicians and Surgeons.

Following an accident in the late 1890s and subsequent death of the young soldier it was decided that Haslemere needed a local hospital of it's own. Haslemere then as now, had a mixed rural community yet everybody pulled together to raise funds for a cottage hospital to be built.

The Hospital was opened in 1898 with four beds but very rapidly the bed numbers increased and more space was required for acute health care. An additional four physicians joined the honorary staff in 1909. These practitioners came from Hindhead, Grayshott and Shottermill joining the Haslemere doctors making a total of eight. However, during WW1 four of the doctors were called up for military service making life quite difficult for the remaining staff to maintain the service. Immediately after the war despite the economic situation, there was universal recognition that the nursing profession had been underpaid and overworked, so the annual budget for nursing was raised from £145 to £261 per annum. Matron and the probationers worked throughout the day and night time often getting no more than two hours rest to cover the hospital services. In 1920 a record of 232 patients were treated in the hospital. The District Cottage Hospital could not be expanded any further.

Thus came the idea of building a new hospital on a larger site. The old recreation ground which our current hospital is sited on was offered at a value of £1,800 for five hectares. Chapman, Lowry & Puttick tendered £30,200 to build a 32-bedded hospital with an Xray block, kitchen and nurses accommodation large enough for further expansion.

The response to the building appeal was fantastic. Apart from a £1000 grant from a trust, rubber flooring for the Xray room and a balance of £1932 from the sale of the old building, all the money was raised by local effort and subscription.

Every donation was recorded. A few examples will show you how widespread and varied they were:- to name but a few Needlework and Linen Guild, Haslemere Cinema, Hindhead Golf Club, Camelsdale Football Club, Fetes and Street collections in all the villages and town (known as cottagers) Aldershot & District Traction Co, Camelsdale and Fernhurst WI, Grayshott Cricket and Football Club, Grayswood Girl Guides, Mothers Unions, St Barts infant School, Tennis Club, The post Office Union, Pubs such as the Red Lion and Wheatsheaf, Whist Drives and Haslemere Carnival. The list of, especially of individuals is endless. Three larger donations were received. The majority of donations were for less than £5. So great was the collective response that enough monies was collected for the hospital and to acquire the first Ambulance.

The building of the hospital was completed promptly within two years. It was formally opened on 20th January 1923 by the Conservative Lord Chancellor, Viscount Cave.



Thus a new era began:-

The honorary staff now included two consultant surgeons, eight doctors, radiographer, staff doctor and masseuse.(physiotherapist) The matron was supported by a sister, four staff nurses and three probationers. The annual nursing budget was £613. A contributory scheme was introduced and parish secretaries were made responsible for subscribers who now numbered 539 in fourteen parishes. Income well exceeded expenditure and valued at £53,870 with dividends from investments. It was recorded that initiative and faith had been crowned with success and the wind was indeed fair. In fact this money was a necessity as a lodge was required for the porter and further accommodation required for night nurses.

327 patients were treated in 1923. 67 for major and 105 for minor operations. A further 68 other surgical and 79 medical cases plus 8 children were delivered. It is likely these births were by caesarean section as the old hospital had been retained as a maternity unit. The masseuse treated 23 cases including radiant treatment. 504 X-rays were carried out both horizontal and vertical!

The current hospital soon become so busy that by the middle of the 1920s additional beds where required on the two wards, more nursing staff needed and a designated Children's ward.

Although Haslemere wasn't the first rural town to develop hospital services it was known as a pioneer in innovations and a model of excellence.

To what can the hospital be attributed? Not merely to a few very active families such as the Penfolds, Hutchinsons and Muirs. The records testify to the large number of people of moderate and small means in Haslemere and surrounding villages, who were willing to serve and give. In the widest sense the hospital was a community effort to meet a community need. Great credit must go to the members of the hard working hospital committee at this time who were efficient and realistic in their management. Far sighted and bold in their decisions, scientific and modern in their outlook.

As the hospital developed in the 1920s other needs were rapidly identified to support hospital services.

Nurse Training School

A School of Nursing started in 1927 for Registered Nurses Nurse's. A nurse's home was built at the rear of the hospital and sponsored by Sir Richard Garton a local philanthropist in memory of his grand-daughter and wife.

The training school for State Registration continued until finished in the mid-1960s, with Enrolled nursing ending finished in the early 1970s. After 1948 elements of the nurses training took place in the Guildford Hospitals.



New recruit arriving

Medical Staffing

Following the retirement of the Haslemere Consultants in the late 60s junior doctors placements at Haslemere also ceased. Five different surgical specialties were maintained for elective surgery at Haslemere by the Guildford Hospitals. These were:- General Surgery, Vascular, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and ENT (Ears, Nose & Throat) Direct medical admissions continued. The GPs in Haslemere and other villages supported the Consultants. In 1980 the two surgeries in Haslemere moved onto the Hospital site into a new build. The medical cover on site made it far easier for the GPs to work as both Hospital Practitioners and Clinical Assistants to assist and maintain the hospital services alongside the consultants.

The private GP practice in Haslemere were also part of the local team supporting the medical patients on site in the hospital with the Haslemere Health Centre GPs. As the private GP's retired or operated in other specific areas of work the Haslemere GPs absorbed the full medical cover for all the hospital services.

Paediatric Services

Further fund raising took place in the community for a Childrens Ward. This was built and opened in 1929. The paediatric beds were extremely well used during the 1930's – 1960s, Large numbers of evacuee's were housed in Haslemere and the surrounding villages during WW2. At least another 12 large homes turned into orphanages or sanctuaries for displaced children. The beds closed in 1970 when Paediatric Services were centralised in Guildford.



Hospital services

1930s – 1948

The hospital continued to need more adult beds. The number on the two ground floor wards increased to 42. Throughout, the hospital was dependent on the community to continue with its local fund raising to maintain services. The archive records show records of all the monies raised in Haslemere and surrounding villages to support the hospital. Many homes had Hospital boxes in which they put in farthings and half pennies and other small denominations but they all contributed toward funding for the hospital.

In 1933 the local football teams initiated raising funds for the Haslemere Hospital Cup Trophy. Although this was curtailed during the Second World War and many of the local football teams have disbanded those that survived continue to play for the cup and very generously continue to donate funds to the hospital. They raise the money by running social events at their matches.

Photo 5 Hospital Cup phot (I will check with Herald)

World War Two

The beautifully maintained gardens at the hospital needed to be transformed at the outbreak of war. The gardens at the front of the hospital which is now the site of Haslemere Health centre was converted into a spectacular kitchen garden. The hospital became quite self-sufficient for fruit and vegetables. Other food stuff was donated and given to the hospital by the community.



1930s garden – Vegetable Garden

The hospital had a very close encounter with a bomb that fell on the Ambulance Centre Pathfields killing the on duty volunteer Marion Clark. She is buried in St. Bartholomew's Church very close to Pathfields.

An old letter found in the hospital from the parents of an Irish student nurse voiced their concern about her safety. The bomb falling outside of London and the usual cities, coastal regions, made national headlines and this is how they learned of the incident. A few broken windows was the main damage at the hospital.

In 1945 following the end of the ward Haslemere and District underwent a large expansion in council homes. Families who fought in the war were promised housing on their return. Maternity beds were in the hospital but there was insufficient capacity for the increased population. A new maternity unit was built. It was named St. Georges Wood and opened in 1947



St Georges Wood Maternity Unit

1948 – Formation of the National Health Service

Our hospital along with other rural hospitals made up 20% of the newly formed NHS. At this point there were 82 beds at Haslemere. The management of hospital services were centralised hence the evolution of Guildford and Godalming Management Committee.

Services in the hospital remained quite stable up until the early 70's. Centralisation was beginning to happen. The School of Nursing merged with the Guildford School of Nursing. In 1983 Haslemere Hospital was transferred in to the newly formed Community Unit. As the Community Unit evolved Haslemere became part of North Downs Community Health Services CEO Anne Butler nee Williams. Haslemere was one of four community hospitals in North Downs alongside Farnham, Fleet and Cranleigh. Milford Hospital stopped being a Chest Hospital in 1980 and became focused as an Elderly care unit.

During this period of time community services flourished. Very strong partnerships were formed across South West and North West Community Services. These included a wide range of other specialties such as Wheelchair Services, Community Dentistry, Community Equipment, Genito-Urinary Services, Breast screening, Diabetes nurses, Incontinent Services, District Nursing, Health Visiting, School Nurses, Prison Health services, Podiatry, Speech and Language services, Intermediate care Services were developed and community estates which with clinic locations was vast. A lot of unused space in the upper floors of Haslemere Hospital was used as clinical space for some of these services which really benefitted us locally.

In addition Haslemere Hospital became more embedded into the community by providing space for the Mental Health Team. Base for the Adult Social Care Team, and providing an office for the Registrar of Births and Deaths. As well as providing space for Age Concern, Haslemere Volunteer Bureau and DISCAS.

The 42 surgical beds continued to provide elective surgery for Guildford Consultants in General, Vascular, Orthopaedic, Gynaecological and ENT surgery. Direct medical admissions were managed by the local GPs.

The first Guildford Knee Replacement operation took place at Haslemere by Mr Peter Stiles.

Professor Mike Bailey General Surgeon Upper GI specialist and Mr. Alan Driscoll Gynaecologist introduced Day Surgery in the early 80s at Haslemere as part of their elective pathways.

This was maintained up until 1986 when the surgery was transferred back to Guildford. The Radiology staff contracted at Haslemere were transferred to Guildford but the staff remained working in Haslemere.

Obstetric Services

Maternity Services – in 1977 amid public outcry South West Surrey Health Authority closed St. Georges Wood. Transferred the service back into the vacated Childrens Ward in the hospital, It was formally opened by HRH Princess Margaret.



Princess Margaret opening St Georges Ward with Sister Holthouse

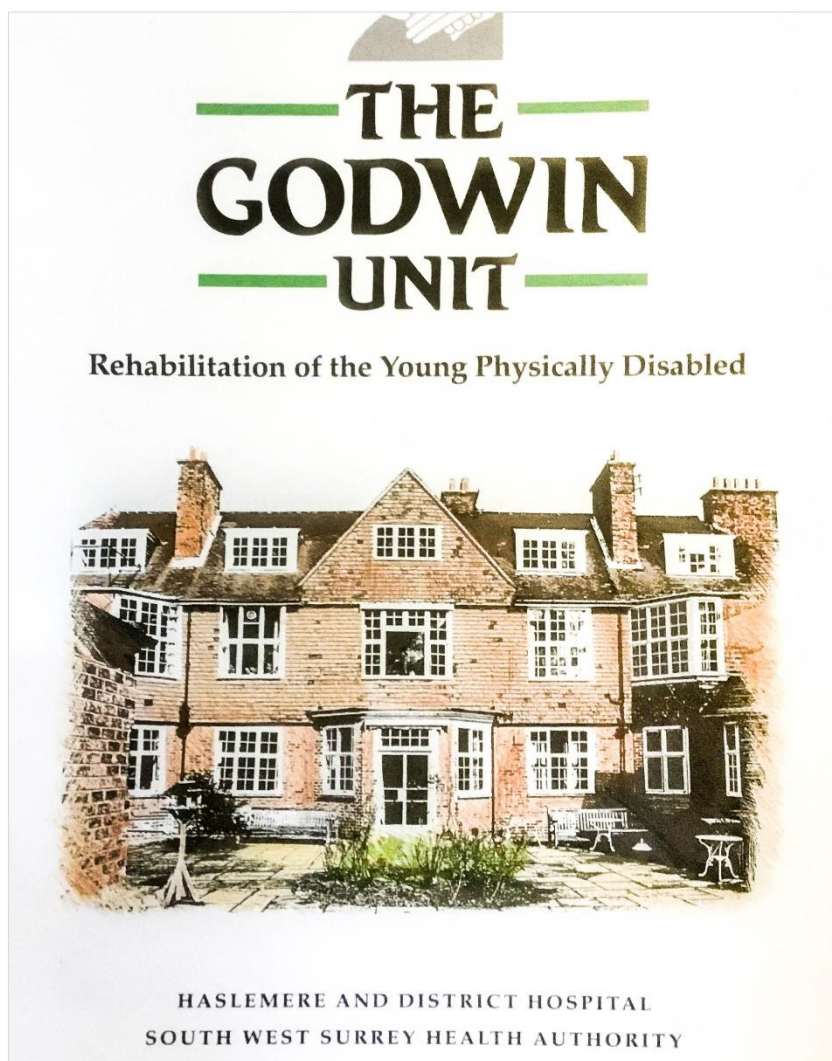
Within 6 years the Obstetric beds were closed and a 7/24 hour outpatient Maternity Hub was created at Haslemere. This ceased in 2017 Midwife's now see patients in the GP surgeries.

Neuro Rehabilitation Services.

In 1986 when the surgical beds closed Dr Jean Stuart Director of Public Health in South West Surrey Health Authority had become aware that a more dynamic service for disability was needed in Surrey for younger adults with neurological condition between the ages of 16 – 64. There was a county wide lack of rehabilitation services. Patients by default ending up in long term care, with families separated by illness.

Her vision was to develop a service which was inclusive and to provide fast track and rehabilitation pathways. Treatment modalities in which patients flowed from acute to intensive rehabilitation as quickly as possible, leading to supportive discharge would hopefully lead patients back into employment and a home life.

The unit opened in 1988 with 14 beds. George ward was renamed as the 'Godwin Unit' after Alma Godwin who was the manager at the time and managed the transition of service. The Unit was formally opened by Virginia Bottomley our local MP and Secretary of State for Health, at the time.



Godwin Unit

The appointment in 1990 of Dr. Richard Gray a Rheumatologist at the RSCH with a specialist interest in rehabilitation transformed the service. He provided the leadership for the unit to thrive. In addition the new Clinical Psychologist he appointed Professor Ian Kneebone had an avid interest in clinical research. Working closely with the University of Surrey he developed research programmes and learning opportunities for graduates in Psychology. Both wards in Haslemere reaped the benefits of this work.

The Unit was transferred to Woking in 2017 by the then community services provider, without consultation. The Unit did not meet the new mixed sex ward regulations, although the sexes were separated by doors and bays the access to these areas was internal only.

Haslemere Estate

During the 1990s the Trust was asked to review the estate. As an outcome the ambulance station on the Grayswood Road was relocated on the Haslemere site, Quedley Dental Clinic closed and the service was relocated to the hospital. The vacated buildings sold.

A need for day care for residents with dementia was identified by the Nurse Visitors for the elderly. With the consent of the League of Friends who built the recreation hall for staff but very underutilised it was suggested as a possible opportunity. Following a business case presented to the board by the nurse managers and agreed the Alzheimer's Day Centre commenced led by Dr. Anne Hunter with a small management team. The centre thrived but like all specialties fashions change. Home care was suggested as the way forward. The centre closed but in 2018 the loss of the centre was having an impact on carers, so it reopened in 2018 and is now known as the Hunter Centre.

Photo 9 (I will ask the Herald if they can give me a copy of HRH Princess Alexander opening the centre in 2000)

Minor Injuries Service

The clinical skill for managing Minor Injuries have varied greatly over the years, in 1973, Major trauma stopped being treated at Haslemere. However, a decision was taken by the management team that a minor trauma service must remain in Haslemere to meet the needs of a rural population and the new Minor Injuries service emerged. It was the first of its kind in the country with appointed medical staff. Initially it was managed by the two hospital consultants and local staff. When the Haslemere Consultants retired during the 70s the service was overseen by Mr. Stiles an Orthopaedic Consultant in Guildford. Out of hours cover was provided by the Local GPs, our radiology department and senior nursing sisters at Haslemere. The acute cover for Minor Injuries ceased when Mr Stiles the Orthopaedic Consultants retired. The GP practice continued to manage the service there on.

During the late 1990s A&E nurses had honed their skills treating minor injuries with limited requirement for medical advice. Minor Injuries, prescribing and radiology courses had been developed for practitioners. Haslemere MIU practitioners all completed their modules of training and easily became independent practitioners.

In 2004 South West Surrey Health Authority prior to estates changes happening arranged for our old minor injuries unit to be replaced at very short notice. To achieve this a new modular build was decided on. Within four months the old building was demolished. Temporary accommodation in the annexe was used to maintain the minor injuries service. Nine separate modules were constructed off site and then craned into position three months later. A much nicer clinical space was achieved for the grand price of £250,000. Not only did it provide better clinical space for treatment rooms it also provided a larger theatre for minor operations, recovery area and decontamination suite which allowed for Endoscopies to take place at Haslemere rather than go to Guildford.

Unfortunately the Endoscopy service was short lived after two years the service was centralised in Guildford.

Haslemere Minor Injuries Unit was the only hospital outside of London who treated a patient immediately following the Kings Cross bombing on July 7th 2005. A Haslemere resident who got out of the tunnel found his way to Waterloo and caught the train home. A relative brought him to the hospital with clothes in tatters, multiple abrasions and hearing loss.

In 2003 a mobile scanning service was developed in Haslemere. A Magnetic Resonance Imaging unit visited weekly and Computerised Tomography Unit visited fortnightly. It was greatly appreciated as inpatients and outpatients no longer had to travel to Guildford. Saved time and transport costs. Once again this service stopped when more scanners became available in Guildford In 2006.

Current Times

In 2017 the RSCH in partnership with Procure the local GP Federation became hosts to the adult community services in Haslemere.

Winter 2019 the Covid pandemic struck the country. Health Services became much pressurised internally and externally. Opening hours for Minor Injuries were extended during Covid and the Orthopaedic consultants in Guildford joined the team in Haslemere to reduce attendances in Guildford. Radiology hours were also extended at Haslemere to support the service, these were challenging times for everyone especially as staffing the services was mainly achieved by existing staff. Since January 2023 a seven day a week service has been commissioned in Haslemere and it is greatly appreciated by the public.

Our local practices were also facing restricted accommodation for possible Covid cases. Additional space was found for primary care to develop a hot lab in the vacant Outpatient annexe for their patients.

The ramifications of the pandemic are still with us today. Haslemere Hospital like many rural hospitals has forever had to change pathways, Staff develop new skills and meet the challenges of delivering health care.

Over the Century the vulnerability of rural hospitals is well documented. Haslemere has certainly faced many challenges of possible closure, and been embroiled in fighting its corner, with 'Bed Pushes' 'Pyjama Days' through the town to name but a few. Public meetings and even deputations to number 10.

Haslemere Hospital has had numerous marriages and divorces of services with different health providers since 1948. Some great some pretty destroying.

This centenary year there is an economic crisis, the pandemic remains a presence and other infectious conditions are out in the community. Under investment in training a full range of clinical staff is having a huge impact on clinicians in the workplace. Far more acute clinical care taking place in primary care.

Living in a rural community one expects to travel for acute care but we should not have to travel in for outpatient and diagnostics treatments, with the additional time and cost implications.

Our community has supported and raised monies for the hospital. It is this action that has kept the hospital viable and invested in. Without the support of our local physicians who initiated local health care in Haslemere 125 years ago we would be lost.

The Haslemere Hospital League of Friends despite the vulnerability of services has tried it's best over the last 70 years to provide support and financial benefits for the patients who use the hospital services in the purchase of equipment, buildings, the little extra's that benefit everybody who uses the site. The patio gardens and furnihings are maintained by us in recent years. This out door space throughout Covid has been invaluable for patients arnd carers to use. Patients and carers really appreciate being able to get outside to enjoy the fresh air during inpatient stays. This is the uniqueness of an older rural hospital.

A new chapter in Health care is on its way, hopefully with the support of our community and others it will continue to provide a robust health service locally.