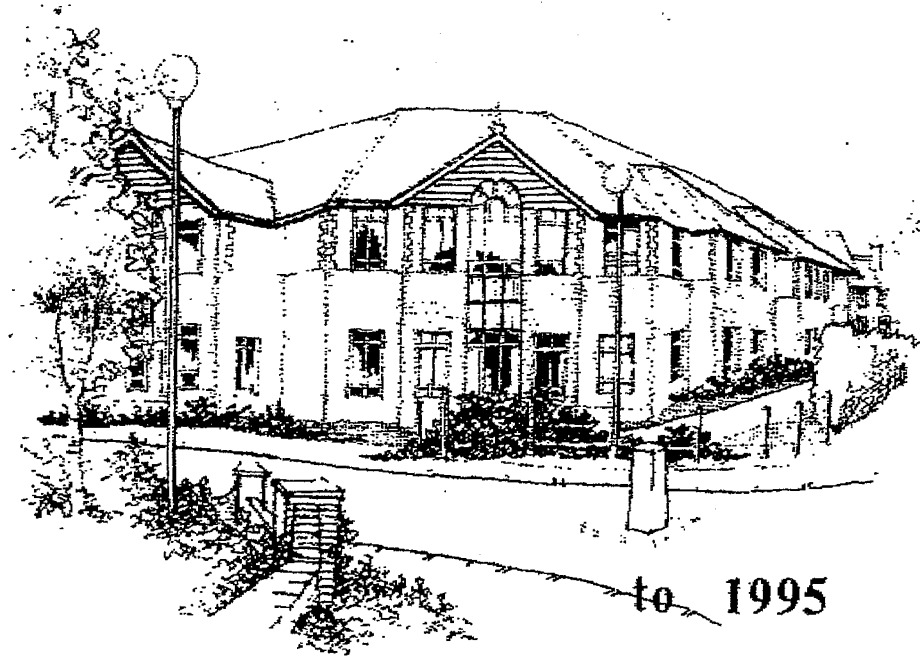


GOSPORT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



from 1923



to 1995

FROM : GOSPORT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL PHONE NO. : 023 9252 4611

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Origins

As its name implies, Gosport War Memorial Hospital was established as a permanent Memorial to the men and women of the Borough of Gosport, and the Officers, non-commissioned Officers and men and women of the Portsmouth Division of the Royal Marine Light Infantry who gave their lives for their country in the Great War 1914 - 1918.

With a population of around 33,000 it was an ambitious project for Gosport to attempt to fund by public subscription but by 1923 £50,000 had been raised. Building and equipping the hospital cost £34,000 and the balance of £16,000 was left in a fund and helped pay for an extension in 1932.

The foundation stone was laid in 1921 by Field Marshall Earl Haig on the three-acre site in Bury Road generously donated by the Prideaux-Brune family.

On April 19th 1923 the hospital was opened providing beds for twenty-six patients and accommodation for the matron and all nursing staff. There were no Doctors on the hospital staff, instead the eight GP's of Gosport continued the care of their own patients after admission. (The GP's also took turns, a week at a time, to become the duty Anaesthetist!)

It was a modern building with full electric lighting and central heating, and equipped with an operating theatre and radiography unit.

The hospital's affairs overall were run by a Board of Elected Trustees together with honorary Medical and Surgical staff, but the day-to-day running was left entirely in the hands of the Matron. The

list of her responsibilities fills two pages of the Constitution and Rules and includes the entire control of the nursing and household staff.

1930's

In May 1932 an extension to the hospital was opened. Changes included the provision of an Out Patient Department, enlargement of various wards, modernisation of the X-ray Department and, to support all this, re-modelling of the heating and water systems. By 1936 the increased use of motor cars made it necessary to remove some lawns to provide parking for ten to twelve cars!!

During the war the hospital continued its work as usual but the patients' views outside were limited by walls of protective sandbags and the windows had blackout blinds at night.

1948 and the National Health Service

Gosport War Memorial Hospital was handed over to the newly formed NHS in what should have been celebrated as its Silver Anniversary year, 1948. Until that time it had been supported by means of public subscription to a Hospital Maintenance Fund which from 1921 to 1947 raised a total of £126,492.

1950's and 1960's

In 1963 Out Patient and Accident and Emergency Departments were opened followed in 1966 by new departments for Physical Medicine and X-Ray. Also in the 1960's Redclyffe Annexe was donated to the hospital.

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1980's and 1990s

The hospital faced a serious threat of closure in the early 80's. The League of Friends, hospital staff and residents of Gosport strongly fought the closure. A petition collected 20,000 signatures, the situation was reviewed and the hospital saved.

The Present

1991 saw the commencement of a £10.5 million, two-phase development which culminates in today's tree planting ceremony.

The major visible parts of this development include the new wards and Day Hospitals for the elderly and the transfer of Maternity Services from Blake Maternity Home to a new Maternity ward. Several original parts of the building have been demolished and replaced while others have simply been re-vamped and modernised.

As can be seen, the overall result is an attractive example of the architecture of public buildings from the early part of the 20th Century, containing the facilities and technology to be expected of a Community Hospital ready for the 21st Century.

The Future

This history of the hospital shows the close links that have always existed between it and the people of Gosport. So while some specialist services are better supplied in other hospitals and some, like Dentistry, are provided closer to the clients in Community Health clinics, the intention is for Gosport War Memorial Hospital to remain THE Hospital for the Community of Gosport.