

# POOLE HOSPITAL CENTENARY



## Celebrating 100 years

Smiling nurses gathered on the steps to wave off the Queen following her official visit in 1969 (above). 38 years on, Poole Hospital has gained around 300 beds and 3,000 staff, but the Hospital's staff remain at the heart of its success.





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## 1907 - 2007



▲ **1900s** Builders wait to greet Lady Cornelia Wimborne at the opening of the new Cornelia Hospital.



◀ **1920s** Christmas in the Women's Surgical Unit at Cornelia.

▼ **1930s** The glamorous Edwina Mountbatten, Countess Mountbatten of Burma, meets staff at the Hospital.

1940s ▶  
Poole Hospital sisters enjoy a Christmas lunch in the nurse's home at Cornelia House.



▼ **1950s** Nurses practice their bandaging skills in the sunshine.



1940s ▶  
Sister Gwladys Thomas poses with a patient outside the surgery ward in 1942. The windows behind them were taped to prevent glass shattering during the war; an incendiary bomb came through the roof in the same year and landed between two beds.



1960s ▶  
Young patients in the children's ward are wowed by a life-sized robot with moving parts!



▲ **1970s** A young patient in the children's ward receives visitors (including a very familiar face at Poole Hospital...).

▶ **1980s** One of many scanners funded by the Poole Hospital Cancer Treatment Trust's ongoing Scanner appeal. This CT Scanner was purchased in the early 80s.



## FLASHBACKS

The Hospital's annual report for 1907 records a total of 55 operations performed during the year. The report also records that 125 hospital patients were cured, whilst 42 were 'relieved' of their symptoms. The most common ailments amongst patients were tonsil problems, but septicaemia, bronchitis and rheumatism were also common.

The Cornelia Hospital was officially renamed Poole General Hospital in 1948 – the same year that the National Health Service was formed.

In 1907, the Cornelia Hospital cost £3,369 to build. The bill for the new main hospital building came to around £4 million in 1969. Today, the Hospital's buildings and land they stand on are valued at around £101million.

When the Cornelia Hospital opened in 1907, local Sheriff Herbert Carter described the building as "rather squat and undistinguished." Fortunately, he was more impressed with the interior, observing that the "accommodation and equipment were excellent".

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## A new hospital is born

Erik Warwick-White, FT Member Representative and former Nurse, recalls the 'Dunkirk spirit' amongst staff as the Hospital underwent dramatic change in the sixties...



Erik Warwick-White

Engineers responsible for the building of the new Hospital greet the Queen at the official opening.



**Helen Baird,**  
**Red Cross volunteer**

Originally employed as a Sister at Southampton Children's Hospital, Helen Baird went on to work at Poole Hospital from 1969 -1972 as a Staff Nurse in C1. She has been a Red Cross volunteer for almost 13 years, and today works on the Hospital's main reception desk.

Helen's father, Mr Thomas Aynsley (or 'Tot' to his friends) was a consultant ophthalmic surgeon who worked at the original Cornelia Hospital, as well as hospitals at Westbourne and Boscombe. He published several articles in the medical press, including one on the modern treatment of corneal ulcers in 1949. Thomas retired from hospital work in 1958 at the age of 60, but continued to work for the NHS, and some private work, until the early 1970s.

I arrived to train as a registered nurse at what was then known as Poole General Hospital in May 1964. The old Cornelia and East Dorset Hospital was still standing on the main Longfleet Road site, as well as the then-new 'A' Block to the rear of that. Much of the old Cornelia was still in use, but very soon was to close completely and be demolished to make way for the planned new hospital. At that time, all student nurses had to 'live in', with no exceptions. I lived in Cornelia Nurse's Hostel, now Cornelia House, and the rest of my set lived in a very large, old and white painted Victorian house called Parkstone House, on the site of the current tower block of the same name.

By mid 1964, the old Cornelia Hospital was almost completely demolished, meaning that many departments had to be re-housed somewhere. Outpatients, Administration offices, Accident and X-Ray all moved to the old St Mary's Hospital (where the Harbour Hospital now stands), along with the Path Lab, Pharmacy, Linen Room and CSSD.

Once the Cornelia Hospital was demolished and building work started, this left only the wards and theatres in A Block operational on the Longfleet Road site, supplemented by the six wards and another theatre at Alderney Hospital. So the Hospital was operating on at least four sites for clinical care, and more than six sites overall. This state of a 'fragmented hospital' continued for just over four years, and must have been an administrative and practical nightmare for all those concerned at the time.

The overall memory I have of the rebuilding of Poole Hospital is of friendliness and 'all pulling together' – the feeling that it was worth putting up with all the inconvenience for a few years for the good of the new hospital to come. That, and the ever present rhythmic thump, thump, thump of the pile drivers that worked from dawn to sunset for many, many months, making the deep foundations for the buildings now standing on the Longfleet Road site. In fact, when piling finally finished after almost two years, all told, the silence was deafening, and quite strange.

There was a great spirit amongst staff and that appears to have lasted from those times and carried forward as Poole Hospital continues to grow and develop. Hopefully it will continue in the years to come. I am very proud to have been 'in at the beginning' and to have had the privilege of experiencing the 'Dunkirk spirit' in the hospital of the sixties, and since then, seeing the hospital develop over the years.



Far left:  
The original  
Cornelia  
Hospital

Left:  
The hospital  
now



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## Amongst royalty...

Poole Hospital has welcomed a number of royal visitors through its doors, as well as one royal patient (Princess Anne had a brief stay at the Hospital when she fell from her horse whilst riding in Dorset). Official visits have included:

Princess Alexandra, cousin to the Queen, came to Poole in 1961 to open the new Maternity Unit at the St Mary's site. ▶



▶ Princess Margaret visited the Hospital in 1966 to attend the nurses' prize-giving ceremony. Margaret also laid the foundation stone for the new nurse's home.

HM the Queen opened the new Hospital buildings in 1969. Nurse Sue Knight, who today works in the Outpatients Department, recalls waiting in the line-up "We had a long wait for the Queen to arrive - I'd had my hair done and it was all getting blown about! It was a really lovely day though." ▶



▶ Princess Diana met young patients on the Children's Ward in 1987. Diana visited the Hospital in connection with her work as Patron of the Great Ormond Street 'Wishing Well' appeal.