





## Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

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### Notes on the production of this anniversary book

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Sydney  
Local Health District

**Front cover:** Prince Alfred Hospital, 1883.

**Back cover:** View of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital from the University of Sydney, 1898.

### 1882

The buildings when finished, impression from Town and Country Newspaper. RPA Museum Image Collection.

# 140 YEARS

## Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

1882 – 2022







**1878**

Stonemasons  
commence work  
on Prince Alfred  
Hospital.

## Foreword

RPA is a hospital built by the people, for the people, on land granted by the Hospital's oldest partner, The University of Sydney, with a vision of forging a partnership that would train and grow future generations of clinicians, scientists and administrators and deliver world leading medicine.

Over the last 140 years, which has included two World Wars and two global pandemics, the staff of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital have remained true to this vision. Our staff have pioneered solutions to some of the world's most complex problems, caring for the sick and bringing hope for future generations.

Through a culture of collaboration and partnership our staff have integrated research and teaching with clinical practice with a focus on excellent patient care. This has seen RPA named one of the leading hospitals in Australia and among the top hospitals in the world by Newsweek. Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is strong because of the people who work here and our rich ties with the community, the ongoing commitment to clinical research and teaching and the connection we have to the stories of the hospital's past.

To celebrate the 140 year anniversary of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital we have partnered with NSW State Archives – Sydney Living Museums to bring to life some of the moments captured in the NSW State Archives' Collection and the RPA Museum Collection that illustrate where this incredible legacy began.

As we prepare for the upcoming major redevelopment of RPA – the largest transformation in the hospital's history, we would like to thank the many staff who have worked here since 1882, the patients and their families that we have cared for and the broader community that RPA is connected to.

**Dr Teresa Anderson AM**  
Chief Executive  
Sydney Local Health District

**Kiel Harvey**  
General Manager  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital





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## 9



# RPA Foundation

## A Royal visit – January 1868

Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, chose her son, His Royal Highness Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh to make a goodwill tour around the world. HMS Galatea was the ship commissioned, it set sail on 26 February 1867, arriving in Sydney Harbour on 21 January 1868.



It was the very first visit by a member of the Royal Family to the colony of New South Wales.

A variety of festivities were organised, including a picnic at the picturesque beach at Clontarf on Middle Harbour.

On the afternoon of 12 March 1868, an Irish fanatic shot His Royal Highness during the festivities. He was treated and the bullet removed. His Royal Highness made a full recovery.

The community rallied, by 20 March Sydney residents had decided to erect the Prince Alfred Memorial Hospital to commemorate the public's satisfaction at the Prince's recovery. A sum of £34,393 was raised by voluntary subscriptions for the purpose, and this was supplemented by Parliamentary votes. The Institution thus became in the nature of a national memorial.

The University of Sydney, itself less than 20 years old, offered land in Camperdown to build a general hospital, providing that the hospital serve as a teaching hospital for its new medical School. The hospital also aimed to provide nurse training, forging a partnership that has remained strong for 140 years.

The Prince Alfred Hospital opened on 25 September 1882, with the Royal prefix added in 1903, it served as a shining example of modern hospital design.

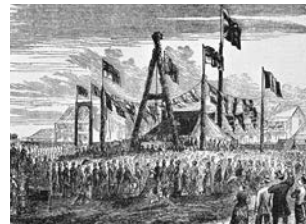
One hundred-and-forty-six patients were admitted on that first day and by the end of the first year over 1000 patients had been treated. Prince Alfred was the first and largest teaching hospital to be built in Sydney.

A hospital, built by the people, for the people.



# Building

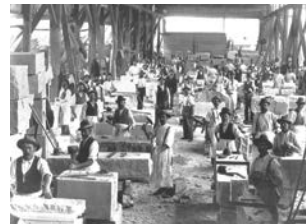
## 1876-1899



01



02



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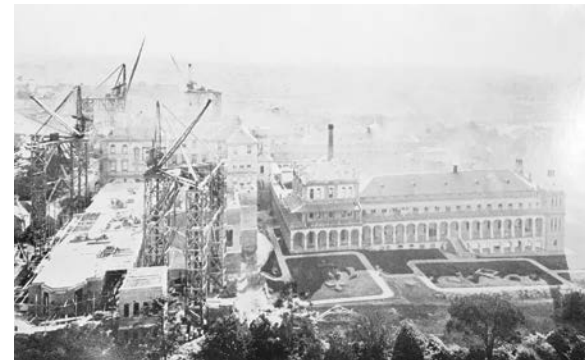


04

- 01 Foundation stone laid, 1876.
- 02 Construction framing, 1878.
- 03 Stonemasons at work, 1878.
- 04 Nurses' Home, 1892.
- 05 Administration Block, 1882.



05



06

## 1900-1929

- 06 Albert Block and Victoria Block under construction c 1902.
- 07 Albert Block and Victoria Block c 1904.
- 08 Isolation Wards under construction, 1928.
- 09 Royal Prince Alfred Hospital northerly aspect, c 1904.

# Royal Prince



07



08



09

## 1930-1939



10



11



12

- 10 Gloucester House under construction, 1936.
- 11 Boiler house, c 1937.
- 12 Gloucester House with D block Pavilion roof top extension to left showing Anderson Stuart Operating Theatres.

### 1876

Foundation stone laid.

### 1880

Mortuary (Pathology building) opens.

### 1882

Prince Alfred Hospital is officially opened by the Governor, Augustus Loftus, following the completion of C and D Block Pavilions.

### 1892

Nurses' Home is opened to accommodate 55 sisters.

### 1903

It is announced that the official title of 'Royal' is conferred upon the Hospital.

### 1904

The Victoria and Albert Pavilions are opened by the Governor Sir Harry Rawson.

### 1907

The building of the Pavilions is completed with the opening of the operating theatres, new lecture hall, gymnastic facilities and x-ray area as well as the remodeling of the Pathology, Mortuary and Laundry blocks.

### 1914

Nurses' Home extension opens to accommodate 210 sisters.

### 1928

D Block Pavilion top floor is extended and enclosed to accommodate construction of the Anderson Stuart Operation Block.

The Isolation Wards at the rear of the campus open.

### 1937

Gloucester House, Psychiatry and Neuro-Surgical buildings open.

Boiler House and the Power Plant buildings behind the Outpatient Department built in 1936 open.

### 1939

The Boutique opens.  
The King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies under construction.



# Building

## 1940-1949

13

**1939**

King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies under construction.



14

**1941**

King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies.

# 1941

All images RPA Museum Collection, unless indicated.

# Royal Prince

## 1950-1959



15

**1941**

The King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies opens.

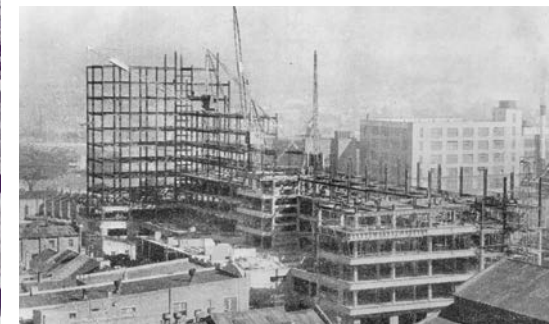
15 King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies built around the Prince Alfred Hotel, 1945.

16 Site preparation for the Queen Mary Nurses' Home, c 1950.

17 Queen Mary Nurses' Home under construction, c 1954.



16



17

**1955**

RPA Chapel opens.

**1957**

RPA Medical Centre on Carillon Avenue, Page Chest Pavilion and the Queen Mary Nurses' Home open.

# Alfred Hospital



# Building

## 1960-1979

18

**ca. 1962**

Page Chest Pavilion.



19



20

- 19 Looking east from Administration Block, c 1978.
- 20 Looking west towards Administration Block, c 1978.

# Royal Prince

## 1980-1999

## 2000-2009

- 21 Edinburgh Block nearing completion, 1982.
- 22 Site Preparation for new Clinical Services Building, 1998.
- 23 Stage 1 Redevelopment complete with opening of new Women and Babies Ambulatory Care, 2002.



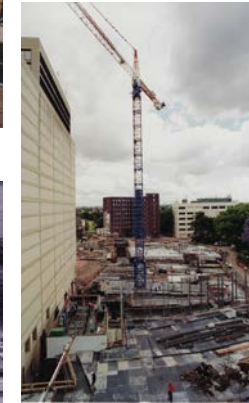
21



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23



24

- 24 Construction of new Clinical Services Building, 2000.
- 25 Clinical Services Building complete, 2007.
- 26 Page Chest Pavilion demolition, 2010.



25



26

**1962**

Blackburn Pavilion opens.

**1976**

Phase 1A Redevelopment project commences.

All buildings to the rear of the Administration block including the Kitchen and Princes Blocks are demolished.

**1984**

\$75 Million Edinburgh block opens.

Multistorey Car Park on Hospital Road opens.

**1998**

Resource Transition Program commences with the demolition of the Schlink Education Centre, 1914 and 1936 Nurses home extensions, and Blackburn Pavilion.

**2002**

Clinical Services Stage 1 RPA Women's and Babies opens and KGV closes to clinical services.

**2007**

Clinical Services building southern entrance Stage 2 opens.

**2009**

Page Chest Pavilion is demolished to build the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.



# Building

## 2010-2019



27



28



29

- 27 Chris O'Brien LifeHouse, 2013.
- 28 Professor Marie Bashir Centre under construction, 2016.
- 29 Professor Marie Bashir Centre, 2017.
- 30 Multistorey staff car park under construction, 2018.



30

# Royal Prince

## 2020-2022



31



32



33

- 31 RPA HealthOne Green Square, sod turn, 2022.
- 32 RPA HealthOne Green Square, 2022.
- 33 Parent and Baby Unit, 2022.



34



35

- 34 The Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) artist impression, 2022.
- 35 The Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) artist impression, 2022.
- 36 Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Redevelopment artist impression, 2022.



36

### 2013

Chris O'Brien Lifehouse opens.

Queen Mary Building sold to University of Sydney.

### 2014

Professor Marie Bashir Centre opens.

### 2018

Lucas Street multistorey staff car park opens.

### 2019

Coalition pledges \$750 million for the redevelopment of RPA during the state election campaign.

### 2020

NSW Government announces \$750 million redevelopment of RPA will be fast tracked.

### 2022

RPA HealthOne Green Square commences construction.

### 2022

Naamuru Parent and Baby Unit opens.

### 2022

Progressed redevelopment of the Camperdown Health Education and Research Precinct, a key part of Tech Central Innovation Precinct, including receiving funding for the state-of-the-art Sydney Biomedical Accelerator Complex at RPA in partnership with the University of Sydney and Centenary Institute.

### 2022

Designs announced for the \$750 million redevelopment of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. The most significant transformation in 140 years.





1876

Laying the  
Foundation Stone.

QVI ALFREDVM DVCEM EDINENSEM  
IN IPSIS FERIIS ET GRATVLATIONIBVS  
QVIBVS EVM CIVITAS SYDN. EXCIEBAT  
AB HOMINE FANATICO GRAVITER VOLNERATVM  
RECINAE MATRI BRITANNISQVE OMNIBVS  
SERVAVIT  
COLONIA NOV. CAMB. AVST.  
TANTI FACINORIS DOLORE ET OPPROBRIO  
LIBERATA HOC AECROTORVM PERFVCIVM  
MEDICINAEQVE DOMICILIVM POSVIT  
A. S. H. MDCCCLXXVI  
V. ILL. HERC. G. R. ROBINSON SS. M. ET G. EQ. PR. COL. PRAEFECTO

In gratitude to God most good and most great who, when Alfred Duke of Edinburgh had been seriously wounded by a fanatic during the very holidays and rejoicing with which the City of Sydney was welcoming him, saved him for the Queen his mother and all Britons. The Colony of New South Wales, freed from the pain and disgrace of so monstrous a crime, founded this refuge of the sick and Home of Healing in the year of our salvation 1876, while His Excellency Sir Hurcules G.R. Robinson. G.C.M.G. was Governor of the Colony.

- Translation of the Foundation Stone, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, 1876.





**1878**

### Stonemasons

The first sections of Prince Alfred Hospital opened in 1882 after taking six years to build. Many skilled tradesmen and artisans were employed in the construction. Some of them are pictured here working in a makeshift shelter on site. The Administration Block, when completed, was a particularly grand edifice for its time. Four-storeys high, it was finished with an imposing façade of cream and red bricks, sandstone embellishments and grey granite columns. Its grandeur befitted its role as a commemoration of the recovery of Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria, following an attempt to assassinate him in Sydney in 1868.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



**1878**

Construction.

**1885**

Administration Block and Porter's Cottage.



*RPA Museum Image Collection*





### 1883

Photographs of an etching collection given to the RPA Museum.



### 1886

#### The Kitchen

The hospital had a separate kitchen block and food was delivered to the wards along a covered walkway. The block contained a spacious kitchen, sculleries, a storeroom, a larder and a servant's dining hall. Cooks and kitchen servants worked with the most modern apparatus. There were jacketed steam boilers and vegetable steamers, a large, gas roasting oven and an even larger double-ovened 'kitchener', that is, an elaborate fuel stove. Like the rest of the hospital the kitchen had running hot water, heated by steam from a huge boiler in the centre of the site.

*Image from the Knox family papers, State Library of NSW*



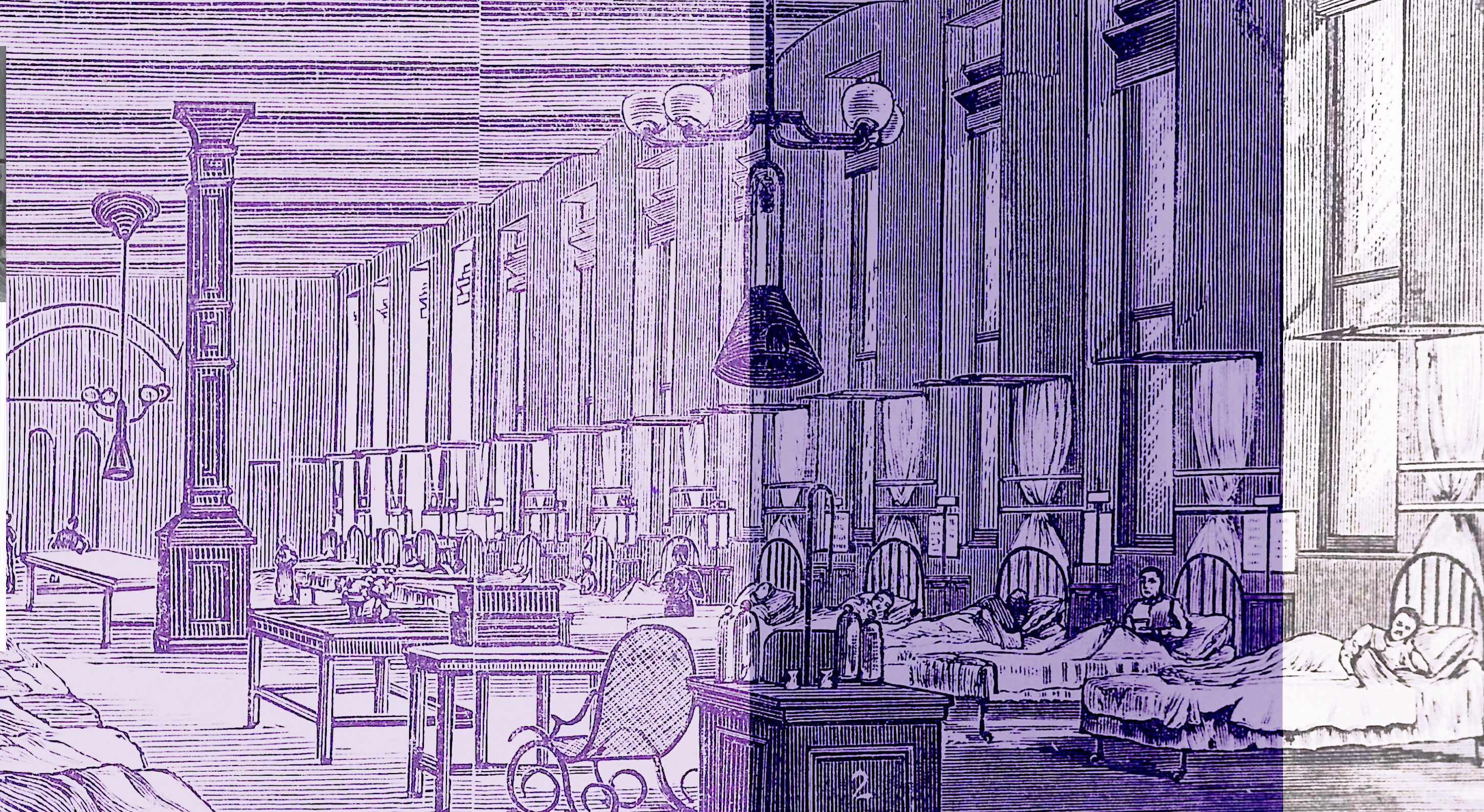


1886

### Male Surgical Ward

The design of Prince Alfred Hospital incorporated the latest international ideas on the role of architecture in the improvement of health. Its main wards, called 'Nightingale wards', were long rooms with well-spaced beds arranged along the sides. They featured large windows on either side that allowed cross-ventilation and plenty of natural light. Another advantage was that nurses could observe many patients at the same time. Of course, patients did not get much privacy although there was a mosquito curtain attached to a bracket that could be drawn over a bed in summer.

*Image from the Knox family papers, State Library of NSW*



1886

### Private Ward

The mission of Prince Alfred Hospital was 'relief of the sick, maimed and the convalescing from all parts of the colony' and no-one was turned away however poor. In those days it was customary for well-off people to be cared for at home by relatives, servants or hired nurses, with the doctor making home visits. But in the new Prince Alfred Hospital there was a private ward at the end of each big ward where paying patients could choose to stay. Strikingly different from the general wards, these private wards had their own separate bathroom and were comfortable, cheerful and home-like.

*Image from the Knox family papers, State Library of NSW*





*Day room . off CT ward . P.A.H. Sydney.*

## 1886

### Ward Day Room

In addition to their primary role of keeping patients clean and comfortable, in the early days nurses also had to do the dusting, cleaning, sweeping, scrubbing and bed-making. Some of their tasks were carried out in the ward day room. This was a small kitchen located at the end of each ward where they made beef tea, arrowroot and warm drinks for the patients as well as poultices and formentations for relieving their pain and inflammation. Nurses were also allowed to use the room as a sitting room when they were not engaged in active duty.

*Image provided by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians History of Medicine Library*

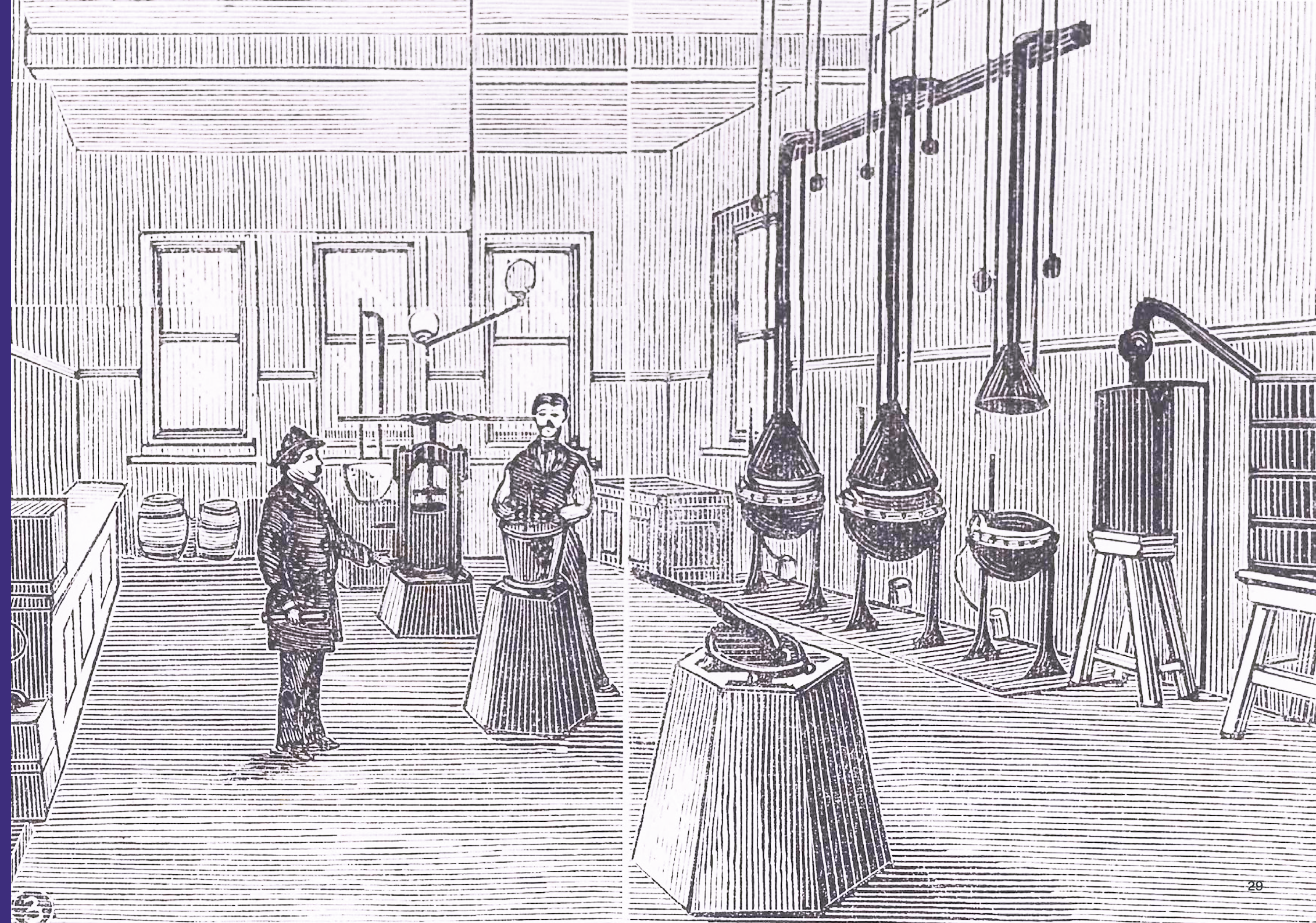


## 1886

### Dispensary

The first health professional appointed to the hospital without a medical degree was a dispenser. That was in 1884, by which time there were educated and professionally trained pharmacists in Australia whose knowledge had a solid basis in science. The hospital's dispensary was a large room located in the basement of the Administration Building and it was here that the pharmacists – called dispensers then – would make up pills, powders and medicines by mixing the ingredients specified in doctors' prescriptions. They served nurses and out-patients separately through two windows with sliding panels.

*Image from the Knox family papers, State Library of NSW*







1886

### The Laundry Block

On the verandah of each ward there was a chute leading to a wire cage. Nurses would put soiled linen in the chute and a laundress would collect it. It was quite a trek to the laundry block which stood on the far-south eastern corner of the site. The hospital had been built on land owned by the University of Sydney and in 1886 it was still surrounded by paddocks. In this picture the laundresses are standing near clothes lines while around them are sheets spread on the grass to dry.

*Image from the Knox family papers, State Library of NSW*







**1887**

### Operation Block Operating Theatre

Before the Operation Block (Princes Block) was built, surgery was performed in the Casualty Department in the Administration Block. The Princes Block was completed in 1887 and its operating theatre had tiers of seats so that students could watch and learn. The hospital originally had gas lighting and was not connected to electricity until 1913, but the new theatre had huge batteries to produce bright electric lighting. These can be seen in the foreground of the picture. A nurse and a warder in his everyday clothes are preparing the room for an operation.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



**1887**

### Men's Ward

In the beginning there was difficulty recruiting nurses, but after a few years the hospital had a band of suitable young women. A dedicated nurses' home was built in 1892. In the meantime, they slept in unsatisfactory little wooden cottages on the hospital grounds or in small cubicles in the Administration Block. The Sisters in charge of a ward each had their own bed-sitting room adjacent to the ward so that they could supervise everything, but they too longed for a nurses' home where they could get a good night's sleep.

*Image courtesy of Inner West Libraries and the donor Robert Hutchinson*

**1887**

### Special Ward

In the same building as the operation theatre there were several small, quiet wards for patients who were recovering from surgery and were not well enough to go back to a big ward. Depending on their condition patients might stay in one of these wards for a few days or a few weeks. The nurse watching over the two patients in the picture has a special uniform with a red sash across her chest. This is to indicate that she is a theatre sister, not a ward nurse.

*Image courtesy of Inner West Libraries and the donor Robert Hutchinson*





# 1889

## Medical Students

The School of Medicine at the University of Sydney began accepting undergraduate students in 1883. They were from quite different social backgrounds, unlike the wealthy university gentlemen of previous decades. Many were Australian born and came from middle-class and working-class families – children of schoolmasters, wheelwrights, mining agents, stonecutters, accountants and pharmacists. The curriculum was difficult and in the first years fewer than half the students graduated. Prince Alfred was the first, and for a long time the only, Clinical School for the university's medical students. The young men pictured here with Professor Anderson Stuart, the creator of the School, are the second ever graduate class.

RPA Museum Image Collection



# ca. 1900

## Dissecting Room

Amongst the students here in the University's dissecting room it is possible to pick out one woman. Perhaps it is Dagmar Berne, the first woman to enrol in medicine in Australia. Dagmar Berne did well in her first year but faced prejudices and did not complete the course, instead gaining her qualifications in Scotland. Others were to follow her pioneering example and eventually two women graduated from Sydney's School of Medicine in 1902. But it was not until 1906 that Prince Alfred Hospital would accept a woman graduate as a resident doctor. Her name was Jessie Aspinall.

Image provided by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians History of Medicine Library



# ca. 1909

Resident Medical Officers including Jessie Aspinall, first female Resident Medical Officer at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.



RPA Museum Image Collection



# 1897

## Patient Transfer

When a person was admitted to the hospital, they were taken to either a men's or a women's pavilion. In this case the patient (or perhaps a person posing as a patient for the sake of the photograph) is being transported in a wheeled litter along the top level of a walkway to a second-floor ward. The porter or trolley-boy, as they were called, looks on. Non-medical employees of the hospital were numerous and included porters, ward and pathology attendants, clerical staff, cooks, laundresses, maids, seamstresses and tradesmen.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



# 1897

## Patient Transport

Before there was a district ambulance service Prince Alfred Hospital had its own horse ambulance, a four-wheeler cab with a waterproof canvas hood, a double seat in front, and room inside for a stretcher. The uniformed porter, along with one or sometimes two nurses, was kept busy picking up cases of severe illness and serious injury. The picture shows the stables where the ambulance and horses were kept. Initially the cab was drawn by a single horse but by the 1890s there were two horses, whose names were Prince and Paddy.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*





**1900**

#### Alexandra Children's Ward

In the era when Prince Alfred Hospital was built, infections were the major cause of illness and great numbers of children were admitted to the children's ward with gastro-enteritis. Since the disease was often fatal for infants, they required constant and careful nursing and a cow was kept at the hospital to provide them with milk. Diphtheria was another feared disease with many infant deaths. There were injuries too. At a time when houses were heated by open fires and candles were carried about at night, newspapers featured many sensational stories of children from surrounding suburbs being taken to the hospital with terrible burns.

*Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia  
PIC/6133/1193*

**ca. 1900**

#### Alfred Roberts Operating Theatre

By 1900 the hospital had adopted the new practice of carrying out surgery under aseptic conditions. This greatly reduced the risk of the patient getting a bacterial infection. Surgeons had long given up wearing blood-stained frock coats and the theatre team in this picture are all wearing white caps and long white gowns. There are no gloves to be seen but that is probably because rubber gloves in those days were thick and reduced feeling in the fingers. The doctor sitting by the patient's head has anaesthetised him by sprinkling chloroform onto a wire and linen mask over his mouth and nose.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*







**ca. 1900**

Front Hall Waiting Room, Prince Alfred Hospital.

RPA Museum  
Image Collection



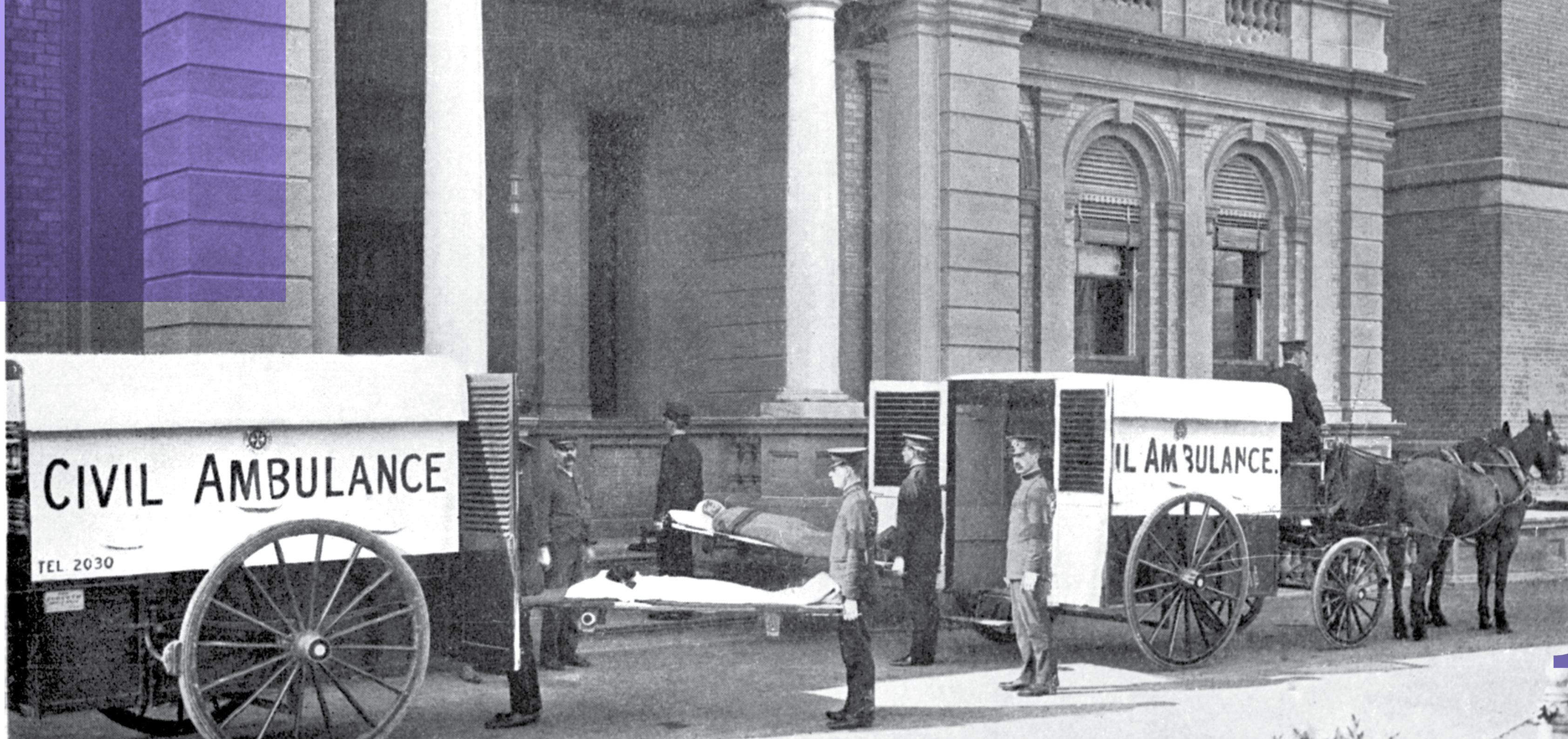
**1906**

### Outpatients Hall

The hospital was now called Royal Prince Alfred after the 'Royal' prefix was added in 1903. The waiting-hall for outpatients was downstairs in the Administration Block. It was a busy place and probably noisy. People sat there until they were called to a medical officer's consulting room – there was one for women and another for men. Close by was the ante-room of the dispensary where the outpatients would go after seeing the doctor and wait for their prescription. In 1906 the hospital's board decided that, except in cases of extreme poverty, outpatients must pay for their medicines. The charge was 3d (3 cents) for the supply of a medicine, but it cost extra if the patient did not bring an empty bottle with them to exchange.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*





1907

#### Civil Ambulance

For much of the hospital's history ambulance porters stretchered patients to the Casualty Department through the busy Front Hall. In 1904 the hospital relinquished its own horse ambulance and patients were instead transported by one of the charity ambulance services that existed at the time. The Civil Ambulance Transport Brigade of NSW was one of these. By 1903 it had amalgamated and become a corps of the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*

1907





**ca. 1888**

Laundry, back  
view Prince Alfred  
Hospital, Sydney.

**1907**

### Laundry

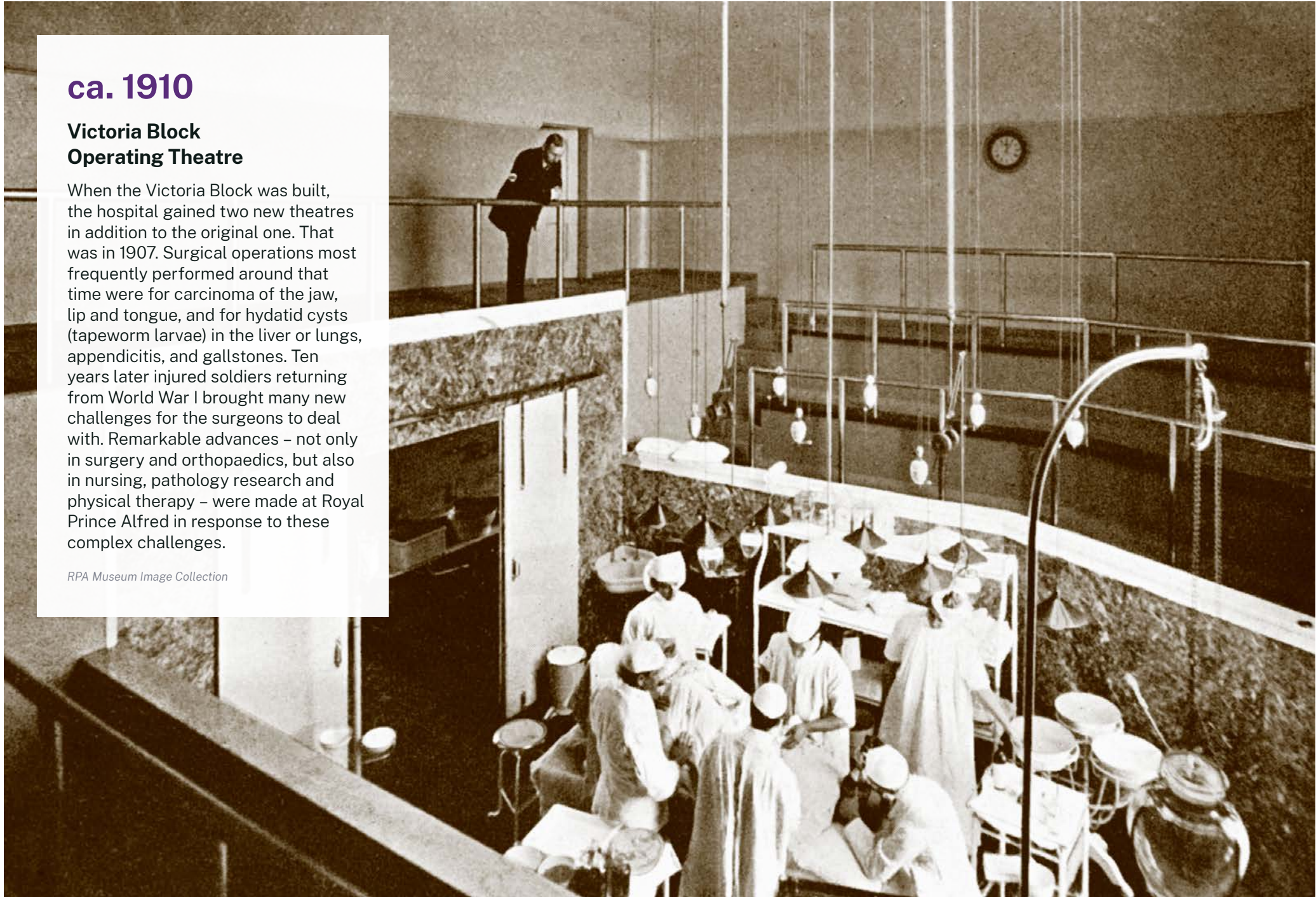
The laundry block was modern and mechanised but even so the laundresses worked hard. First, they had to sort through the laundry baskets and take foul linen to a wash room where it was disinfected and washed separately before going in with the general linen wash. Then they operated the various pieces of apparatus – washing and wringing machines, a centrifugal hydro-extractor, a mangle and the sparging table where clean sheets were sprinkled with water before being ironed. In the picture laundresses are feeding sheets into an ironing machine. The boiler house outside the building provided steam for heating the water and powering the steam engine that ran the machinery.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



*RPA Museum Image Collection*





ca. 1910

Victoria Block  
Operating Theatre

When the Victoria Block was built, the hospital gained two new theatres in addition to the original one. That was in 1907. Surgical operations most frequently performed around that time were for carcinoma of the jaw, lip and tongue, and for hydatid cysts (tapeworm larvae) in the liver or lungs, appendicitis, and gallstones. Ten years later injured soldiers returning from World War I brought many new challenges for the surgeons to deal with. Remarkable advances – not only in surgery and orthopaedics, but also in nursing, pathology research and physical therapy – were made at Royal Prince Alfred in response to these complex challenges.

RPA Museum Image Collection

12

AN URGENT OPE

(By F.R.C.S.)

Urgent operations are so common nowadays in the life of a big hospital that they are looked upon quite as a portion of the day's routine—nearly every day bringing its regular quota of from one to five or six. And one becomes so used to this regular routine, and its methodical working, that one almost forgets to comment on the complicated machinery and the great number of persons involved in bringing these operations to fruition, and in co-ordinating all the human elements concerned.

An urgent case is admitted to hospital, and it is seen by a Junior Resident Medical Officer, and by the Superintendent or his deputy. It is decided that the patient is suffering from a condition which needs immediate operation. A surgeon is communicated with, and a time arranged for the “op.”—perhaps only a quarter of an hour from the time of admission. Everything must be in readiness at that moment, and all concerned are responsible that there shall be no delay. The patient's

12

Prince Alfred Hospital Gazette.

April 26, 1918.

AN URGENT OPERATION AT HOSPITAL.

(By F.R.C.S.)

Urgent operations are so common nowadays in the life of a big hospital that they are looked upon quite as a portion of the day's routine—nearly every day bringing its regular quota of from one to five or six. And one becomes so used to this regular routine, and its methodical working, that one almost forgets to comment on the complicated machinery and the great number of persons involved in bringing these operations to fruition, and in co-ordinating all the human elements concerned.

An urgent case is admitted to hospital, and it is seen by a Junior Resident Medical Officer, and by the Superintendent or his deputy. It is decided that the patient is suffering from a condition which needs immediate operation. A surgeon is communicated with, and a time arranged for the “op.”—perhaps only a quarter of an hour from the time of admission. Everything must be in readiness at that moment, and all concerned are responsible that there shall be no delay. The patient's

friends must be interviewed and the necessity for operation explained. The Matron must be informed, in order that nurses may be in attendance at the operation; the operating theatre nurse must prepare the theatre; the instrument attendant must have his instruments selected and sterilized; the anaesthetist must examine the patient and be waiting in the theatre to commence the administration of the anaesthetic on arrival of the surgeon; the sister and nurses and wardsmen in the ward to which the patient is admitted must prepare the patient by sterilizing the skin, and in other ways; the trolleyman must be in readiness to wheel the patient speedily to the theatre; and lastly, the bed must be prepared for the reception of the patient, with hot-water tins and every emergency appliance in the ward to which he is returned after operation.

An urgent operation, apart from the operation itself, is no simple matter, and yet in all big hospitals they are going on day after day, year in, year out; and are accepted as part of the ordinary routine, and carried out as such.

1918  
RPA Gazette  
article.

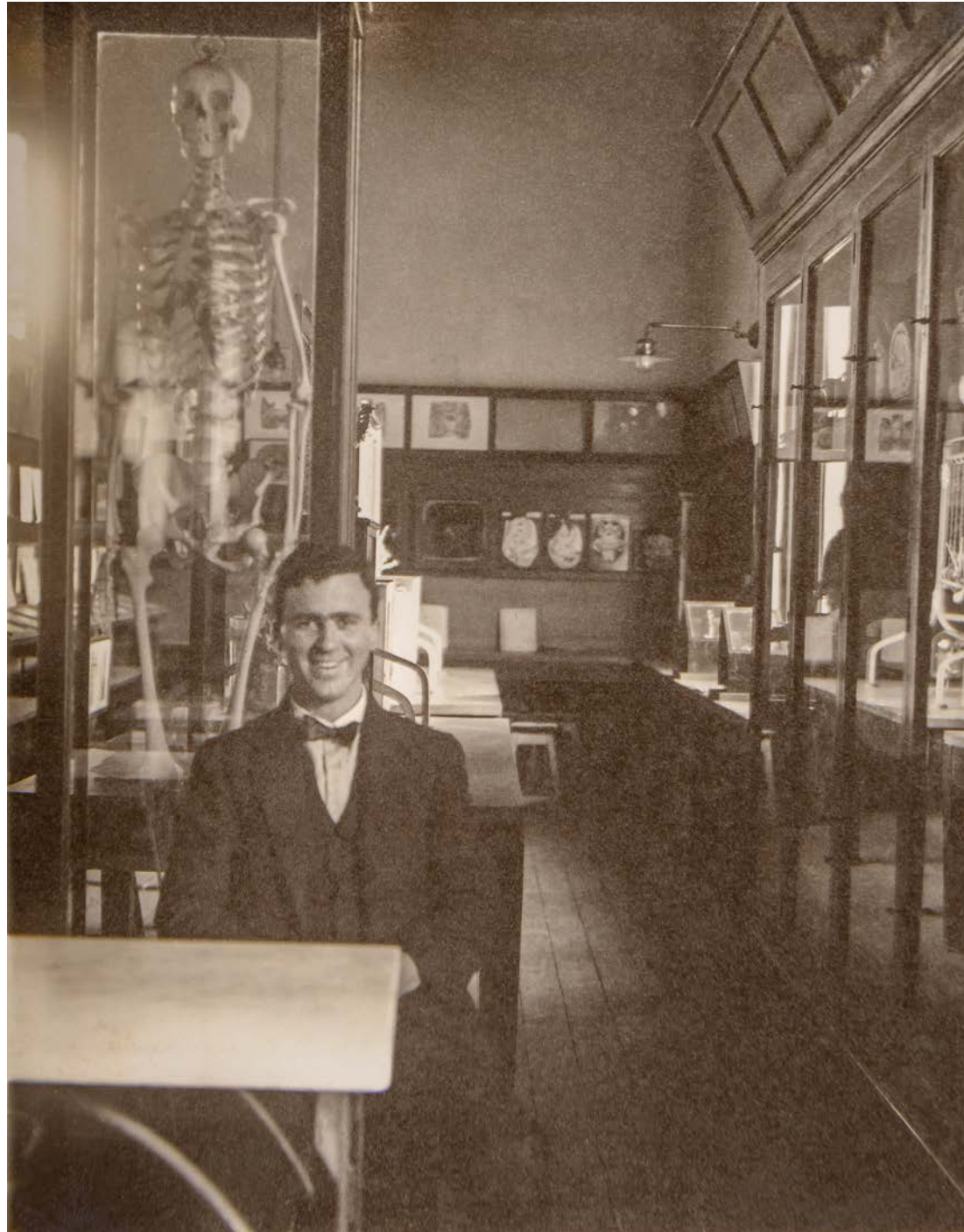


1916

**Anatomy Department  
Reading Room**

Here is medical student Clarence Hains happily sitting amongst what he called ‘Old Friends’. The photograph was taken the year he graduated from the School of Medicine. During World War I many doctors, nurses and ancillary staff of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital left to join the armed services. They were encouraged to enlist and recent medical graduates, like Clarence, were rushed through a short period of experience in the wards before embarking for overseas. Through the difficult war years, the hospital had to carry on despite its seriously depleted staff numbers. Clarence, like many others, did not return from the war.

*Image courtesy of the School of Medicine Heritage Collection,  
University of Sydney*



1917

**Visitors Arriving**

It is a sunny afternoon and visitors are making their way to the wards, but there were times when the hospital was closed to visitors. In 1915, for example, they were not allowed for two months because of an outbreak of diphtheria, scarlet fever and measles amongst patients. And during the 1919 ‘pneumonic influenza’ pandemic, only visitors to seriously ill patients were allowed. During those influenza months, admissions to the hospital were restricted, all staff had to wear masks, and outpatients had to wait for their consultations in the open air and remain three feet (about a metre) away from each other.

*Photographer Clarence Hains; Image courtesy of the School of  
Medicine Heritage Collection, University of Sydney*



ca. 1910

### Open Air Ward

Fresh air was important. At one stage there were several open air wards connected to the main hospital buildings by a covered timber walkway. These wards were located on the site where Gloucester House would later be built. Children benefited from fresh air too. In 1908 the children's ward was moved from the first floor of the Operation Block to the ground floor so that cots could be wheeled out to the back lawns in the sun. A verandah was added too so that some children could remain in the open air all the time.

*Image, NSW State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/15890]-M3609*



ca. 1900

Children in the Garden.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



1917

### Emergency Ward – Visiting on the Verandah

When World War I broke out in 1914 the hospital arranged to take patients from military camps in NSW. Some of these men had contracted pneumonia, influenza and cerebro-spinal meningitis in the camps, while others required minor surgery. These men were admitted to general civilian wards, including verandah wards like the one in the picture. But in 1918, when the numbers of wounded men returning from the front outgrew the accommodation at Randwick Military Hospital, the Department of Defence arranged for Royal Prince Alfred's entire Albert Pavilion to become a military block. Royal Prince Alfred had officially become a military hospital.

*Photographer Clarence Hains; Image courtesy of the School of Medicine Heritage Collection, University of Sydney*



1917

C-Block Verandah Ward.



RPA Museum Image Collection



1917

### Surgical Ward

Unlike most official photographs of the wards, this more candid picture taken by a young resident medical officer shows visitors with the patients. Some are clustered around beds, some are sitting on them. On admittance to hospital, patients were given passes for two visitors, who could use them on three specified afternoons a week. Extra visitor tickets could be purchased but patients were still only allowed to have two visitors at a time.

*Photographer Clarence Hains; image courtesy of the School of Medicine Heritage Collection, University of Sydney*





## 1919

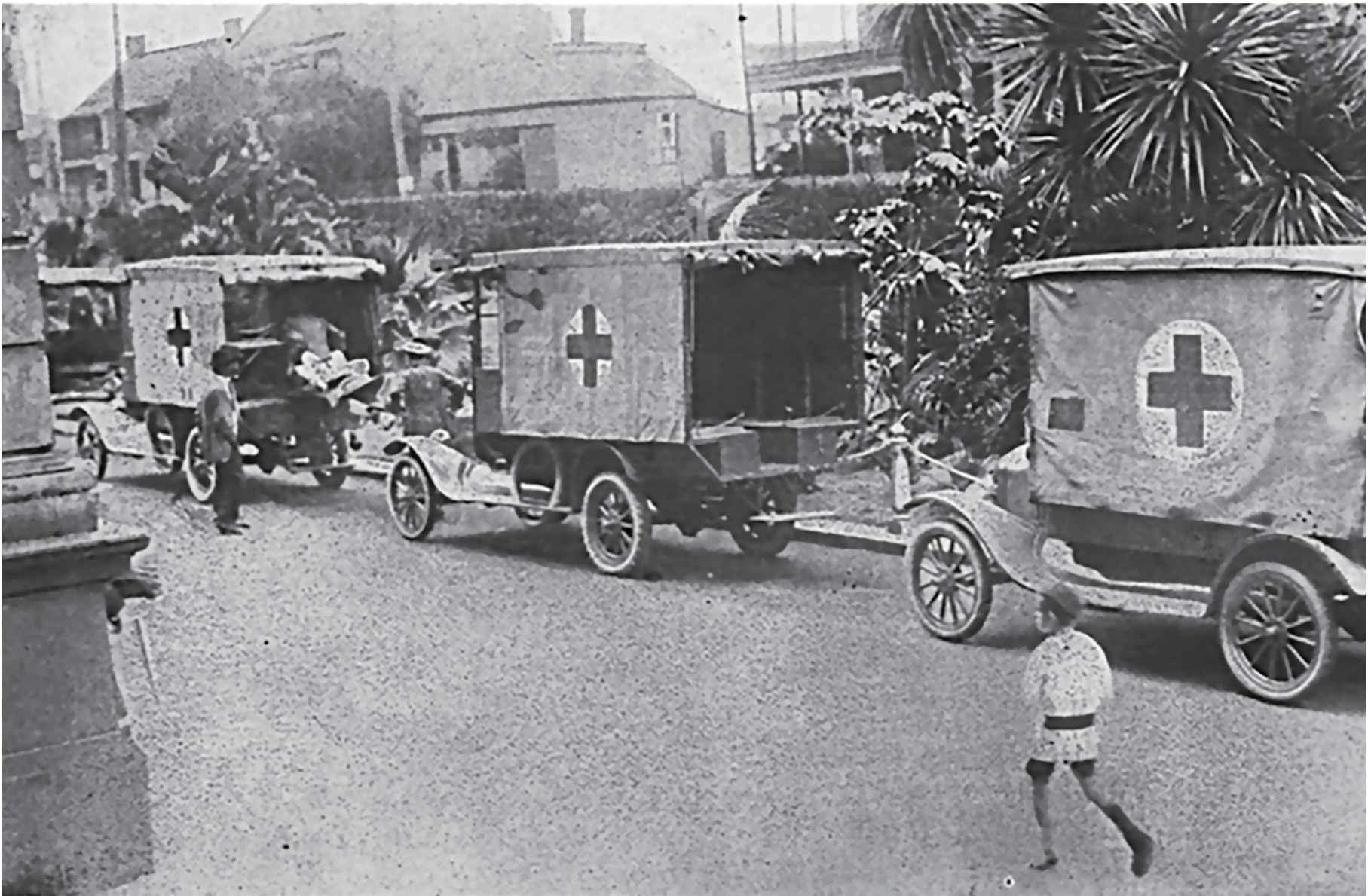
### Repatriation Patients

While some returned servicemen were permanent bed-patients, others could walk or get about in wheelchairs. To aid their convalescence the hospital provided a recreation and smoking room for each ward. These were fitted out by the Red Cross Society and other donors with furniture, books, magazines and games. The men also occupied themselves with needlework and toy-making, and attended classes in practical subjects like book-keeping. The hospital expanded its Medical Gymnastics Department at the recommendation of surgeons experienced in orthopaedic work. It was here that servicemen received 'after-treatment' through massage, exercises, electrical appliances and various types of baths.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*

## 1918

Soldiers being admitted to the hospital for treatment.



*1919 Annual Report, RPA  
Museum Image Collection*



**The Outbreak of Influenza.**—Upon a Government, the Board of Directors promptly assist in the great national crisis which the State, by opening the Wards of the Hospital for the reception of severe cases of pneumonic influenza. This was decided upon during the month of March, and on the 23rd of that month 16 cases were received. This number rapidly increased until, at the end of March, the total number of admissions was 197. During the month the numbers continued to increase until the period from the 8th to the 16th, the average 300 of these patients in the wards. From that date there was a gradual decline in the number, which at the end of April was 146. During the month of May there was a slight decrease and the numbers fell again to about 75, but gradually they rose again and during June the average number of cases was about 170 per diem. From the beginning of July, however, a steady decline set in, and by the end of that month the total number was 19. The last cases admitted were in the middle of August, and the wards were closed to influenza cases after the middle of that month. During the earlier part of this visitation the cases received were of a very serious character, as may be gathered from the fact that, from March 23rd to August 18th, there were 180 deaths. The worst period was during the latter part of the month of March, and the earlier part and middle of April, when the numbers of deaths were very high. On one day there were 10 deaths, while on other days there were 9, 8 and 7. The effect of this extra call upon the services of the Hospital was to bring about some dislocation in the general work, but, fortunately, owing to the voluntary assistance rendered by a considerable number of whole-hearted and generous spirited men and women, it was possible to be carried on without the need to close wards, as might have been the case but for this help. The experience gained will no doubt be of great value should there be a recurrence of the disease.

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REPORT  
OF THE  
**Royal Prince Alfred Hospital**  
SYDNEY

FOR THE  
Year ended June 30th, 1919.

ROBFIELD, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

Wholly set up and printed in New South Wales by James & Co.,  
at The Advertiser Office, Liverpool Road.

1919

**1919**  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital  
Annual Report.

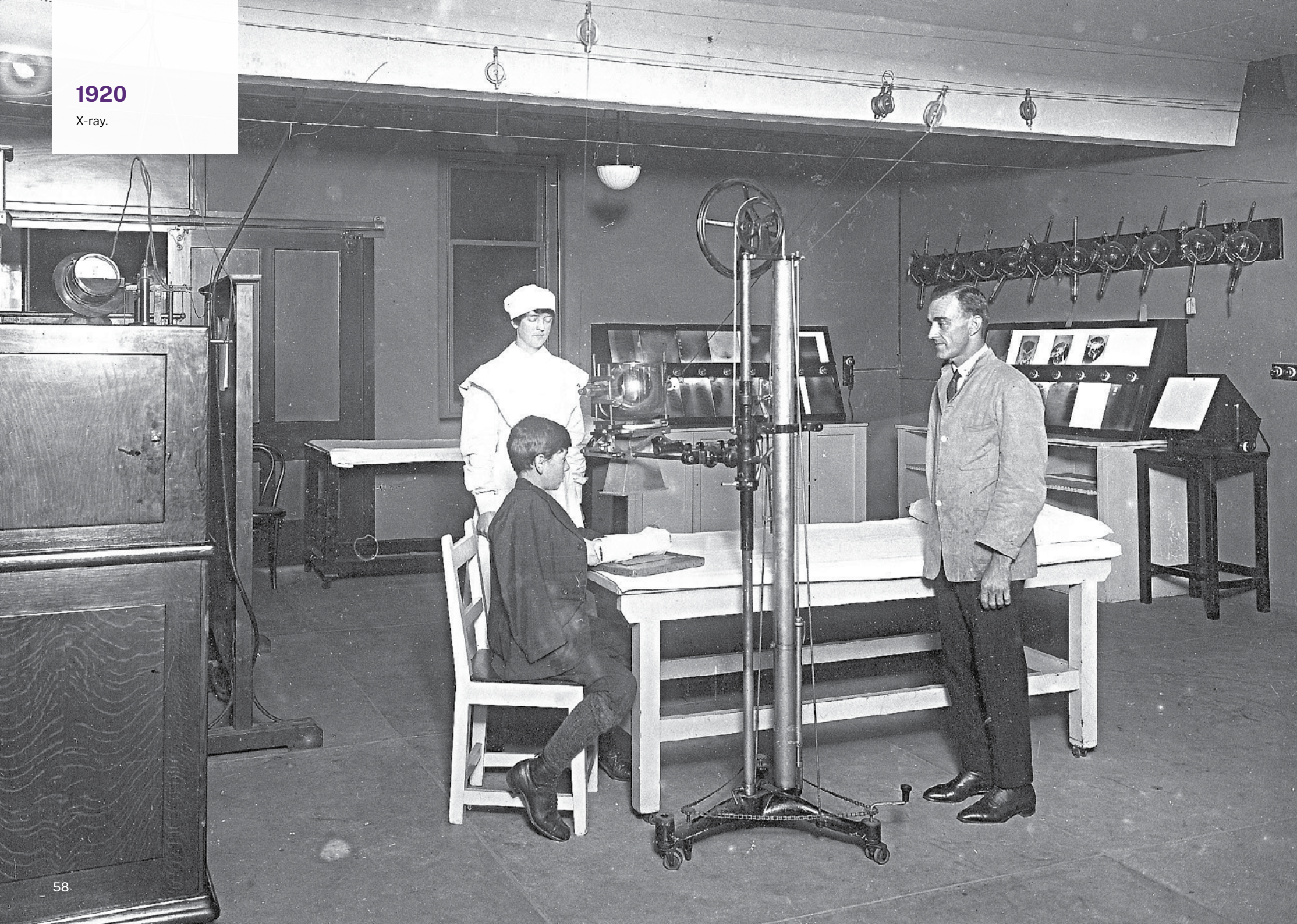


**1919**  
The Outbreak of Influenza.



1920

X-ray.



1920

## Pathology

The first building constructed on the hospital site was the 'Dead House'. Initially it was a mortuary and autopsy room where causes of death were determined as best they could be within the limits of knowledge at the time. It became the Pathology Department when the hospital's first pathologist was appointed in 1886. By 1905 the building had been enlarged and pathologists were testing human samples for such diseases as typhoid, tuberculosis and malaria. Besides testing, they were also conducting scientific research. For a time in the 1920s Pathology was manufacturing its own life-saving insulin for the hospital's diabetes patients.

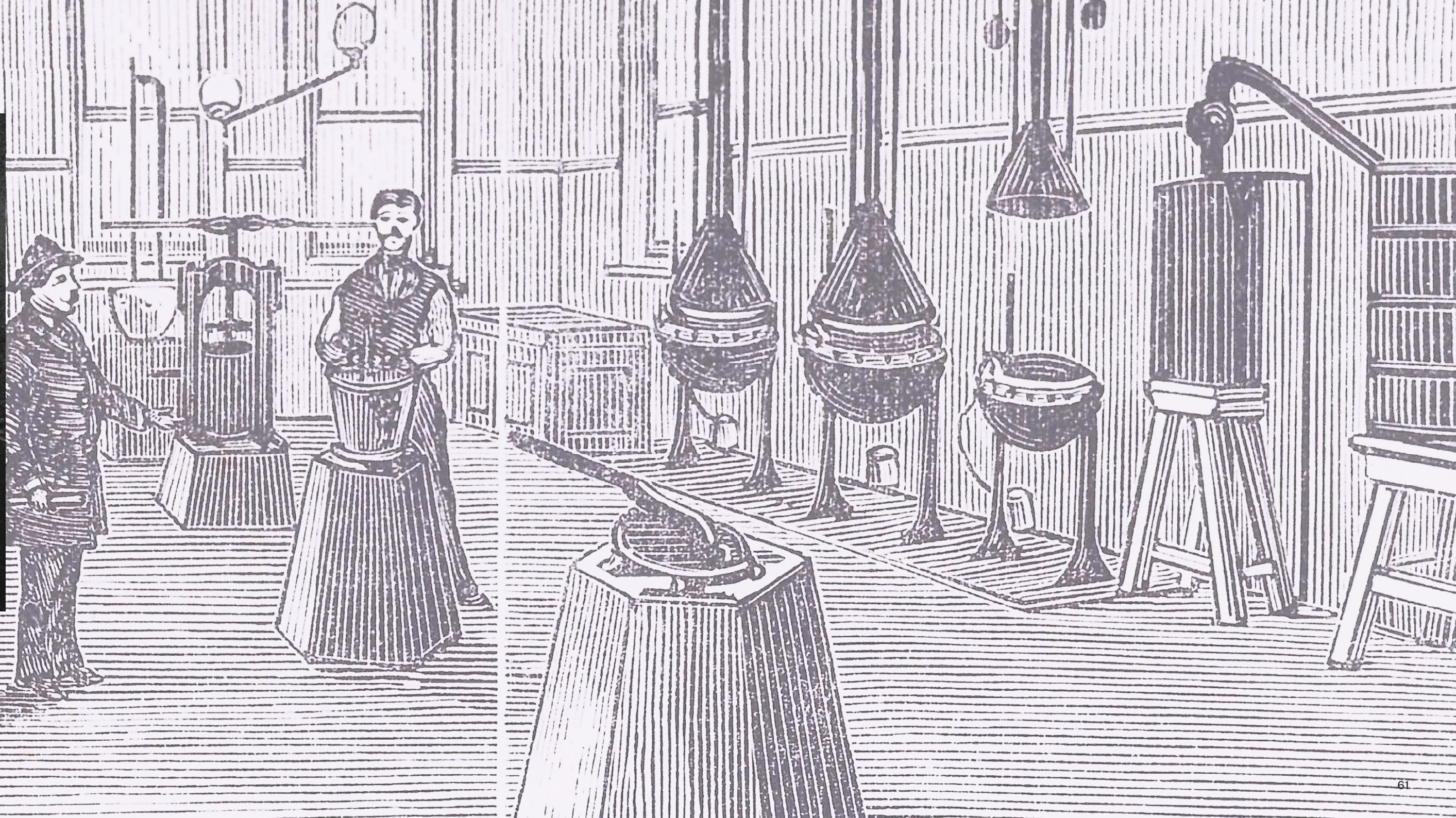
*RPA Museum Image Collection*



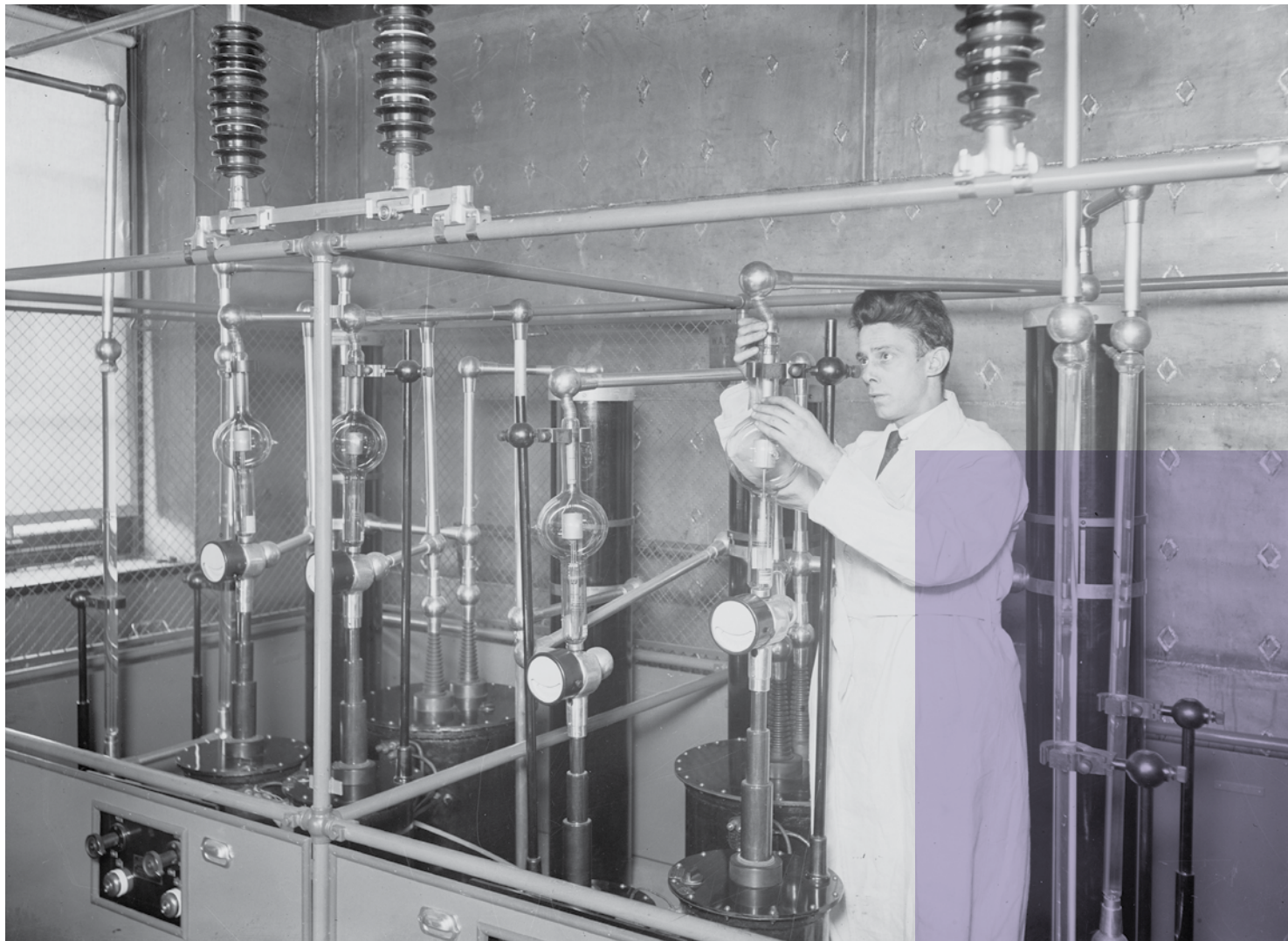


RPA Museum Image Collection

**1922**  
Dispensary  
Laboratory.







## 1928

### Cancer Treatment

The technician here is preparing X-ray equipment for use in cancer treatment. A Cancer Research Committee had been formed at the University of Sydney in 1924, and by the late 1920s research undertaken at Royal Prince Alfred was being put into practice. Previously the main way of dealing with cancer was surgical excision, but additional treatments now being introduced included the colloidal lead method, radium, and deep X-ray therapy.

*Image supplied by Fairfax Media*

## 1933

### Medical Records Department

With typewriters clacking and papers rattling, the staff of the medical records department had an important role in the functioning of the hospital. Over the years medical records have had to keep up with the increasing complexity of medical care. Initially patient records were filed under the name of their physician or surgeon. But in 1907 this approach was overhauled and records incorporated a newly devised international system of disease classification. Another improvement came in 1946 when a US consultant gave a course in medical record library science at the main teaching hospitals. This step was intended to introduce conformity of classification and nomenclature throughout Australia.

*Image from the Sam Hood collection, State Library of NSW*







## 1933

### Alexandra Children's Ward Solarium

Sunlight and fresh air were considered good for children. The first Alexandra Children's Ward was built in 1887 and although it changed its location several times it kept the same name. At its final location there was nowhere for nurses to wheel children outside but a glass-panelled solarium was soon built. Here children could enjoy the full benefits of sunlight throughout the year 'despite minor inclemency of weather'. Parents, however, were not considered good for children. They were only allowed to visit for one hour on Wednesdays and Sundays. Nurses did not appreciate having to calm all the wailing patients after the parents left.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*







**1938**

**University of Sydney  
Commemoration Day**

These women medical students are dressed up in bonnets and parasols to celebrate the early women graduates of the university's School of Medicine. They would have known how difficult it had been for women in the past to gain general acceptance as doctors. Sydney University students' annual Commemoration Day processions used to be something of a highlight in Sydney. Proceeding from the university and down along George Street, they were noted for their witty and political floats. The procession in 1938 must have been long – 'The Ladies of Medicine' float is numbered 72.

*Image from the Sam Hood collection, State Library of NSW*



1939

### Dietician

Watched over by the hospital's dietician a trainee nurse carefully prepares a special meal. A Dietetics Department had recently been established at the hospital. Medical checks of men enlisting for World War I had shown that many sections of Australian society had poor health. At the same time scientists worldwide were recognising that some diseases, poor general health and low resistance to infection were caused by poor nutrition. With these things in mind the hospital planned to appoint a dietician to advise on hospital food and to develop special diets for patients with particular conditions. But this did not actually happen until 1936.

*Image provided by the State Library of NSW*



1943

### Kitchen

While kitchen staff go about their general duties it appears that these three nurses are practising Invalid Cooking. As part of their four-year course nurses were given lectures in Anatomy and Physiology and Practical Nursing in their first year; Surgical Nursing and Medical Nursing in second year; and Hygiene and Infection, as well as Invalid Cookery, in third year. Invalid Cookery lessons were given by the Head Dietician and involved the making of several bland dishes including beef tea and egg flips.

*Image, NSW State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/16087]-St26108*



1941

Kitchen, King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies.



*RPA Museum Image Collection*



1912

Christmas on the Wards at  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.



1932

Christmas on  
the Wards at  
Royal Prince  
Alfred Hospital.





1940

### Christmas Day

Each year Father Christmas, bearing an uncanny resemblance to one of the resident doctors, would arrive at the Children's Ward in a decorated jalopy packed with toys. He's pictured here with Matron Dunn and nurses with young patients. After some high jinks outside he would go into the ward to give presents to children who were bedridden. In those times nurses all lived on-site in the Nurses Home and those who could not go home would have enjoyed a bit of Christmas fun at the hospital.

*Image from the Sam Hood Collection, State Library of NSW*



*RPA Museum Image Collection*





Memoir,  
Sister Helen  
Croll Wilson.

# 1943

## Nurse Classroom

Nurses sit attentively as a Tutor Sister delivers a lecture in Anatomy. In the Preliminary Training School new trainee nurses would learn practical nursing procedures and attend lectures in Anatomy and Physiology given by Tutor Sisters. After two months they would have to pass an examination before being allocated to wards. Throughout the remainder of their four-year course, they would attend additional lectures between ward duties. About those early Anatomy classes – there was little specific instruction on the female anatomy and none at all on the male anatomy. Some male patients delighted in giving trainee nurses practical demonstrations on this subject.

Image, NSW State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/16087]-St26107

## ROYAL PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL 1943-1947

Twenty three of us arrived at the door of the Preliminary Training School at 9 o'clock on Monday morning 12th July, 1943 to begin our nursing training. We were greeted by our three Tutor Sisters immaculate in their blue checked double breasted and starched uniforms and geometrically accurate organdie veils. Sister McGarry was the senior Tutor Sister, and gave us most of our lectures, while Sister Brownlow and Sister Moore gave us the practical lessons.

The first day remains a jumble of memories, although I do remember being handed at the door a small square of torn sheeting to remove my lipstick. (Thus began an on-going struggle to wear make-up like normal people, which I have never achieved!) We collected our uniforms from the Sewing Room which was in the bowels of the hospital, probably in the basement of the original building.

We were known for all time as the First Purple Group as our uniforms were of a heavy cotton (Tobralco) in a rather revolting purple colour, an attempt at the original lilac. The long-sleeved dresses had white starched collars and cuffs but we were not issued with aprons at this stage which <sup>was</sup> a great disappointment to me, as I really visualised 'proper' nurses in veils and aprons. We also wore a muslin 'butterfly' cap, so-called because the method of pinning it up resulted in a wing on either side of the head. Wartime clothing (and food) had just been introduced, and we were issued with an additional 130 coupons for our uniforms.





**1941**

Operating Theatre,  
King George V  
Hospital for Mothers  
and Babies.

RPA Museum Image Collection



**1943**

**Operating Theatre**

Surgical staffing was depleted during World War II as most of the surgeons and assistant surgeons were engaged in active service with the Australian Defence Forces.

*Image, NSW State Archives,  
NRS-4481-3-[7/16087]-St26106*



**1941**

**Control station, King George V  
Hospital for Mothers and Babies**

When the patient calls the nurse answers.

*Photographer Ray Olson; Image from the  
State Library of NSW*

**1943**

**Hospital Ward**

Some Nightingale-style wards like this one were still in use in the 1940s and to some extent the Nightingale method of nursing training was still practiced. But that was changing rapidly. It was no longer enough for nurses to deal simply with the patient's comfort and cleanliness. New technologies meant more involvement. Injection of insulin, sulphonamides and penicillin, for example; attention to patient ventilators and tracheotomies; using machines for monitoring a patient's condition. The specialisation of medical care after World War II created the need for specialised nursing.

*Image, NSW State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/16087]-St26105*





1941

### Nursery, King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies

While Sister tends to a baby, the nurse is perhaps waiting for the rush. For much of its history Royal Prince Alfred did not have an obstetrics department. Sydney seemed to be already well served with Crown Street and Royal Women's Hospitals. But it was finally agreed that a university teaching hospital with no obstetrics ward was an anomaly. In 1941 the King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies opened. It was fully occupied from the beginning and the post-war baby boom soon led to so much overcrowding that beds were placed in corridors.

*Image from the Max Dupain Collection, State Library of NSW*



1947

### Signalling system, King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies

These mothers have nursing attention at their fingertips. King George V Hospital was considered very modern and had many innovations. One of these was a communication system that allowed a patient to press a bedside button and light up to two signals, one over her door and another on the panel at the sister's station. There was also a two-way speaker system between patient and nurse. In those times mothers stayed in bed eight to ten days after the delivery of their baby and nurses attended to their comfort and hygiene.

*Image from the State Library of NSW*



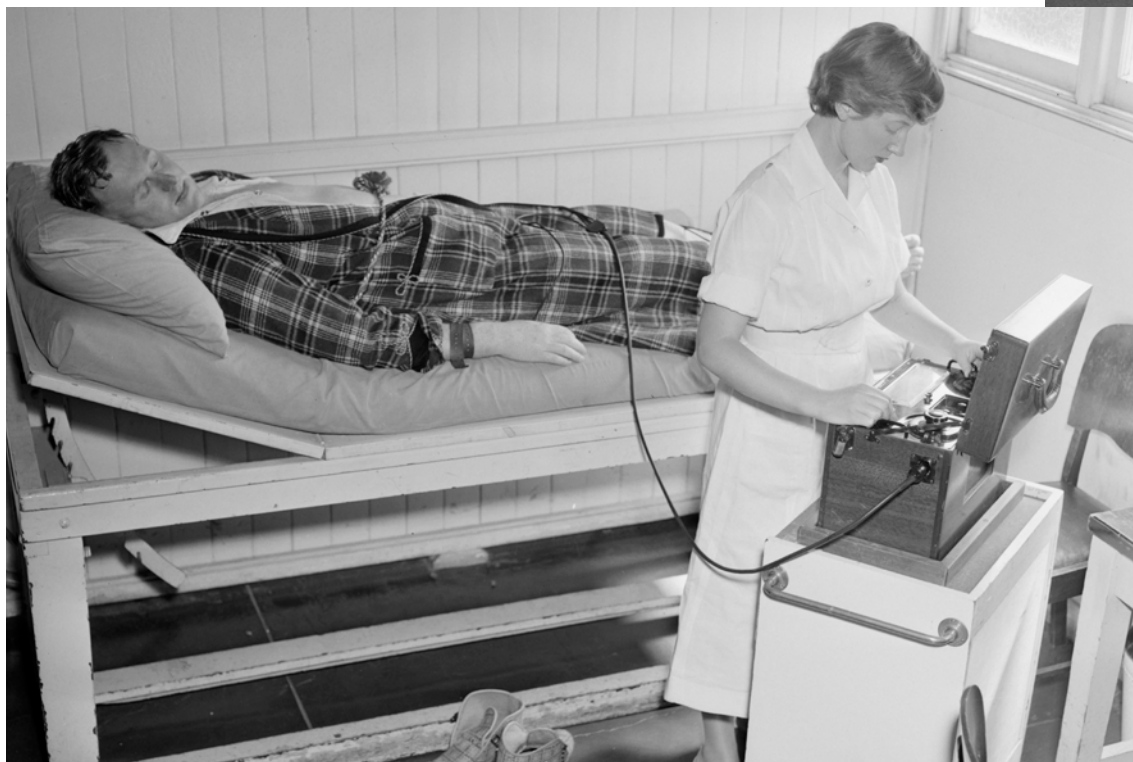
1956

### Baby Public Viewing Day, King George V Hospital for Mothers and Babies

Washed, weighed, tagged and wrapped, baby is ready for public viewing. Mum has brought delighted Dad along to see his baby for the first time. In those days babies were kept in the hospital nursery and only brought to the mother's bedside at feeding time. During visiting hours nurses would show babies at the nursery's viewing window. It was not until the 1970s that a companion was regularly allowed to stay with a mother in the delivery room while she gave birth.

*Photographer Bob Donaldson; Image from Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW*





# 1956

## Heart Clinic

At the Hallstrom Institute of Cardiology this man is going through a series of examinations to test his heart health. In this room the assistant is using an electrocardiogram (ECG) to sense electrical signals from his heart. The machine's readings are recorded on a paper strip and later the assistant will cut up the strip to attach it to a report. Cardiovascular disease headed the list of medical admissions to Royal Prince Alfred when the Hallstrom Institute of Cardiology was founded in 1949. At the time it was the only centre in Australia devoted exclusively to research into heart disease.

*Photographer Bob Donaldson; Image from Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.*



# 1959

## Physiotherapy

They are not really dancing – it's physiotherapy. As early as 1889 nurses at Prince Alfred Hospital were performing massage on patients to relieve pain. In 1902 the Department of Massage, Medical Gymnastics and Electricity was set up with qualified masseurs. Most of them were women and they treated both in- and out-patients. The department expanded to accommodate repatriated servicemen during World War I and later on, during the 1930s poliomyelitis epidemics, it became important for patients with musculoskeletal disorders caused by polio. In 1940 the department updated its name to the 'Physiotherapy Department'. By then physiotherapy had largely become a profession for women.

*Photographer Lynch; Image from State Library of NSW*



# 1959

## Colombo Plan Student

The Colombo Plan was an intergovernmental program that began in 1951. Its aim was to promote partnerships between countries in the Asia-Pacific region and raise people's skill levels in areas such as health, education and public administration. Royal Prince Alfred Hospital took scholarship students wanting to train in medical science and health care. Pictured here is Mr John Ong Bah Too who is studying medical dispensing. He was the third man from Sarawak to study at the hospital.

*Photographer J.Tanner; Image from the National Archives of Australia: A1501, A1894/2*



ca. 1960

### Central Sterile Supplies

These women played an important role in ensuring that a patient's hospital stay had a successful outcome. Central Sterile Supplies staff contributed to infection control in the hospital through issuing ready prepared trays with sterile instruments and dressings to the wards. They also made certain that all wards had an adequate supply of clean sterile syringes each day, and they stored and managed sterile apparatus such as orthopaedic frames, cot-sides and drip stands.

RPA Museum Image Collection



1972

### Computers

Mr Bob Fitz, a computer programmer, and Mr Andrew Mieszkowski, computer operator, at work on the hospital's Honeywell 516 computer. This was in the early days of computerisation, when men wore sideburns and wide brown ties, and computers were used for tasks that were clerical, not medical.

RPA Museum Image Collection

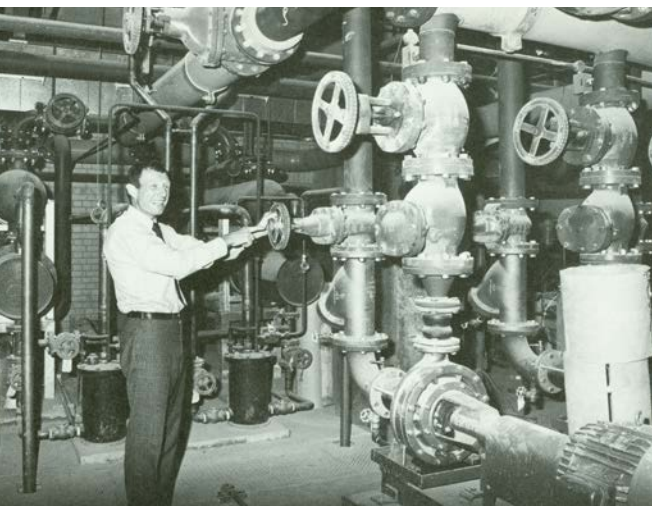


1975

### Audio Teaching Aid

In the RPA School of Nursing eight nurses are listening to a lecture on a central cassette deck. At the time this was considered a very up-to-date teaching aid. The hospital's nursing school would go on for another twelve years but in 1987 it held its last graduation ceremony for general students. All nursing training would now be based in tertiary institutions.

RPA Museum Image Collection



1981

### Air Conditioning Plant

A great deal happens underground at Royal Prince Alfred and air quality management is just part of what goes on. Mr Tony Wynne, the hospital's Deputy Maintenance Manager, is inspecting a small section of the air conditioning plant being installed in a new building in 1981.

RPA Museum Image Collection

1976

### Emergency Department

At this time the staff of the hospital's 'shop front' were treating an average of 750 patients a week. That same year the first Director of the Emergency Department was appointed.

RPA Museum Image Collection



# Pioneers in

## 1957

### Open-Heart Surgery Patients

When he was nine years old Rodney Merrett (on the left in a check dressing gown) became the first person to have open-heart surgery in NSW. A new American heart-lung machine was used and four Australian and US surgeons were in attendance. Rodney spent six weeks in the Page Chest Pavilion and years later he would recall how he and other children who had the operation around the same time staved off boredom by playing tricks on the nurses and even taking off for walks in the street. In this picture US surgeon Dr Henry Bahnson is revisiting some of his young heart surgery patients.

*RPA Museum Image Collection*



## 1986

### First Liver Transplant

The National Liver Transplant Unit at Royal Prince Alfred performed its first liver transplant in January 1986. Headed by Professor Sheil, the operation took 14 hours to perform with 26 specialised staff using two theatres simultaneously. The first liver transplant in Australia had taken place in 1968 but it was not until the 1980s that liver transplantation became a successful procedure. After five years of performing transplants the National Liver Transplant Unit was able to report that 75 per cent of recipients, who would otherwise have died, survived at least a year.

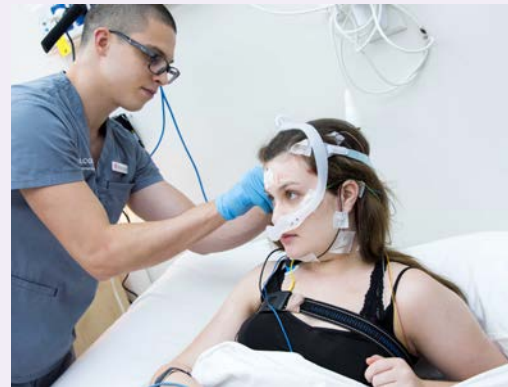
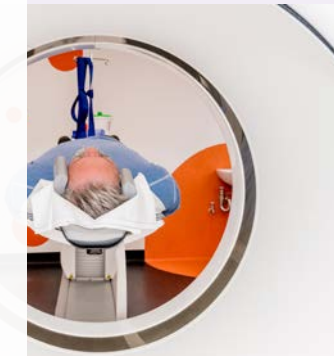
*RPA Museum Image Collection*



## 1882–2022

### A Culture of Discovery

Since its foundation 140 years ago, our staff at RPA have pioneered innovative techniques, treatments and complex interventions. Outstanding contributions to healthcare over the past century include: the first open heart surgery in NSW; the first and only hospital in NSW to establish a Liver Transplant Unit; the largest Kidney Transplant Centre in NSW; Australia's first Perinatal Medicine Unit, first fetal heart monitor and the first Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in a general hospital; the first aortic valve replacement; the first Triage Nurses in Australia; the first coronary angiography in NSW; the first Nuclear Medicine Department in Australia; the first National Medical Cyclotron and PET scanner; the first Total Body PET-CT scanner in the Southern Hemisphere; the first TGA-licensed Good Manufacturing Practice Cyclotron in a public hospital in Australia; the first intra-operative MRI scanner in Australia; Australia's first Hybrid Interventional Laboratory within the RPA Theatre Precinct; the first Robotic Training Institute in the Southern Hemisphere; the first Audiology Unit in an Australian teaching hospital; the first academic Dermatology Service in Australia; the first Gynaecological Oncology Unit in Australia; the first Psychiatric Assessment Unit for people who are deaf or hearing impaired; the first Sleep Disorders Centre in Australia; the largest Melanoma Unit in the world; a large In-Vitro Fertilisation Unit; innovative surgery for sarcoma; Australia's first major Haemophilia Centre; an internationally recognised Diabetes Centre; leadership in Anaesthetic continuing education; the only hospital to achieve Diamond Status from the World Stroke Organisation for the management of stroke patients; the only Endovascular Clot Retrieval service in NSW that has been accessible 24/7 to all patients across NSW; Australia's first dedicated Institute for Academic Surgery and a research-oriented clinical environment that nurtured the development of three major Medical Research Institutes – the Centenary Institute, the Heart Research Institute and the Woolcock Institute.

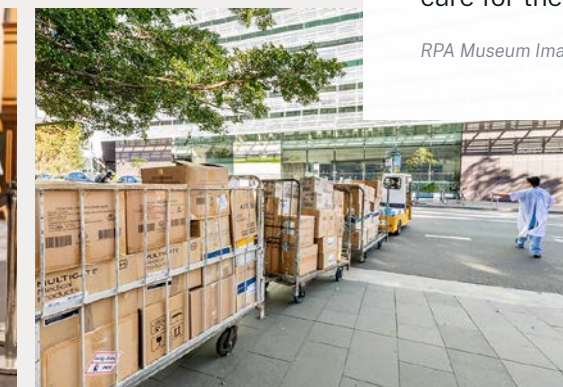


# patient care





# Extraordinary



The first case of COVID-19 in Australia was identified in late January 2020.

RPA opened the first COVID-19 testing clinic in NSW just a few days later on 30 January, the same day as the World Health Organisation declared a global health emergency.

RPA had entered a most extraordinary period in its history. The whole of RPA's operations would become involved. Just some of the early responses included enhancing ICU, the setting up of dedicated COVID-19 wards, changing the model of the just launched RPA Virtual Hospital, alterations to staff roles and positions, the largest vaccination campaign in history and changes to entrances and signage.

COVID-19 continues to affect the ways in which RPA staff work and care for their community.

*RPA Museum Image Collection, 2019-2022.*

# COVID-19

# response



# Royal Prince

## RPA Today

Today, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is one of Australia's leading hospitals.

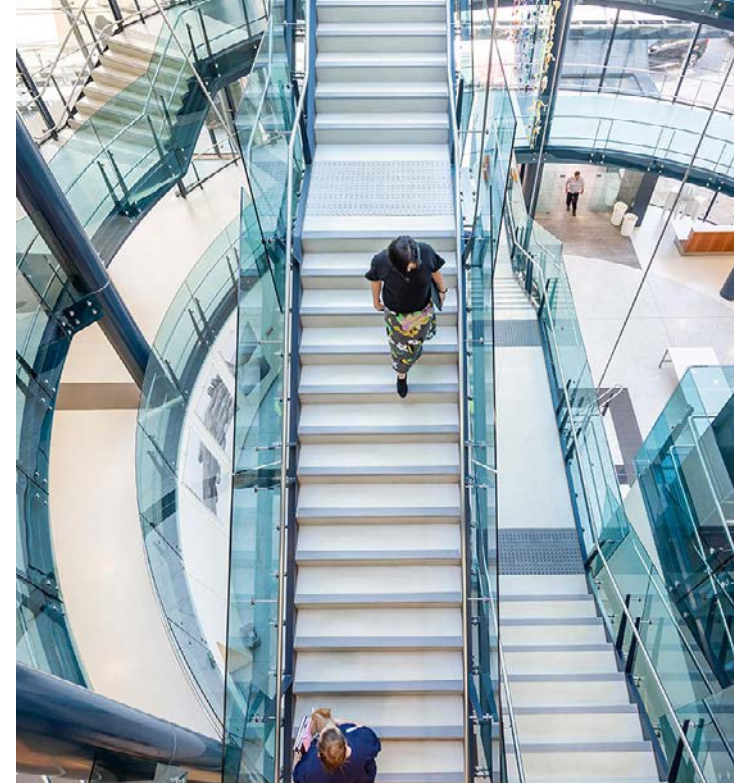
RPA is a premier tertiary and quaternary referral hospital, recognised as a leader in healthcare excellence and innovation. A key hospital of Sydney Local Health District, RPA serves our local community and patients from across NSW, Australia and internationally.

RPA has a national and international reputation for excellence, established through the efforts of our staff in patient care, teaching, research and support services. Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is proud of its connection with the community, and has a strong partnership with the Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern, the oldest Aboriginal Medical Service in the Country.

A \$750 million redevelopment of RPA is underway, the most significant transformation in the 140 year history of the hospital.

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is one the key anchor tenants of Sydney's Tech Central Precinct and in particular the Camperdown Health Education Research Precinct. RPA clinician-researchers generated more than 1360 publications in 2021, advancing the field of medicine and ensuring access to the latest innovations and evidence-based care for our patients.

In its anniversary year, RPA announced a new initiative with its long term partner the University of Sydney to physically link our facilities for the very first time through the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator. RPA and the University of Sydney recognise the critical importance of the interface between discovery-based research and patients. The Sydney Biomedical Accelerator will be a research complex spanning the two organisations, where scientists will collaborate to solve some of the world's most complex problems and make the translation of research to patient care even faster.



# Alfred Hospital





First Superintendent, Dr Byrne, playing violin.





