

Margaret Harris Hospital

1917 – 1982

Details

Margaret Harris Hospital was built at North Parramatta in 1917 by Burnside Presbyterian Homes for Children as a hospital for children who were living in the Homes. It was later replaced by a larger building on Masons Drive, opposite the North Parramatta Burnside Homes. The last patient was discharged on 23 June 1982 and the hospital was then closed.

Margaret Harris Hospital was named after Miss Margaret Harris, of Ultimo, who was a donor to Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes for Children. At the time it was opened, 140 children lived at Burnside, and the Margaret Harris Hospital provided nursing care to children with routine childhood illnesses and injuries.

Susan Keen, historian of Burnside, says the hospital conducted regular tonsil operations on 20 to 30 children at a time: 'the whole procedure resembling a highly efficient production line'. Keen notes that tonsillectomies and adenoid removal were routine operations at the time, done automatically to many children. She quotes a story told about this experience by ex-resident of Burnside, Bat Tucker:

Being in hospital was an event which was thought to be exciting but proved to be rather frightening. I was 'chosen' with some of the other boys from our Home to sleep 'one' night in the Burnside hospital. We were told that we would be spending the night there because of an excess of newcomers to the Homes.

Needless to say, we were duped! On arrival at the hospital, we discovered that many other boys and girls were also there. After tea, the boys were bedded down in one ward, and the girls in another. There was much laughter and chatter as we enjoyed our change of surroundings and the break to our daily routine! Alas. The nursing sister came in and ruined everything by telling us that we had to be quiet and go to sleep as we were to have an operation the next day to have our adenoids and tonsils removed.

Well, you could have heard a pin drop in either ward, as we took in this astounding news. We were flabbergasted, to say the least.

The operating theatre was situated in a glassed in verandah. After a frugal breakfast the next morning, the first patient passed our ward and entered the theatre, which was quite close by. We all heard a gurgling noise as she was operated on. The girls were done first, and then the boys, thirty children in all. It was quite a shock!

Gallery



The First Margaret Harris Hospital

Description: Captioned as 'The First Margaret Harris Hospital, the generous gift of Miss Margaret Harris of "Littlebridge", Ultimo. It was opened on 15th December 1917, by Her Excellency Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson'. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



Original ward, First Margaret Harris Hospital

Description: Captioned as 'One of the two original wards at the Hospital'. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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- [Records held by Burnside Archives \(1911 - current\)](#)

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