

Staff memories



“The hospital has changed beyond recognition over the years from a very small cottage hospital where you virtually knew every member of staff. The whole structure was very much like the army with senior nurses like army officers. You opened doors for senior nurses and sisters had their own sitting rooms.”

Chris Enright, Nurse



“I have seen enormous changes to the hospital since I started here over 30 years ago. I have enjoyed working for Hemel Hempstead hospital and helping other people.”

Anne Higham, Volunteer



“There has always been a wonderful morale at Hemel Hempstead Hospital. We have never stood still here and I think it is a testimony to the staff how they have adapted to the changes over the years.”

Ian Barrison, Consultant



“When I first came to West Herts Hospital it was very different. Matron ruled! There were a lot of nurses who were spinsters and nursing was their life. Staff were well known characters and they were here forever.”

Brenda Rance, Matron



“Since I started in the NHS in 1973 things have improved greatly. I remember the old nightingale wards where everyone was in one big bay, until they built the new wards to the standards of the times and they went to 6 bedded bays.

Hemel Hempstead Hospital has changed and developed over the years and will continue to develop into the future.”

Bill Wilson, Planning Officer

The Hemel Hempstead Times

1826 ~ 2009

Changing Times

The history of Hemel Hempstead General Hospital provides a fascinating reflection of the changes that have occurred in healthcare since the early 19th century.

The first hospital at Hemel Hempstead was founded in an old row of cottages at Piccotts End in 1826 and, since that time, the hospital has developed and improved its services to meet the changing trends in hospital care. This early infirmary served all the districts from Bushey to Tring and out to Redbourn, Harpenden and St Albans, until in 1831 it was decided that a second infirmary was needed in Hemel Hempstead to cope with the greatly increased demand.

The hospital has been training nurses since 1890. In 1919, when state registration for nurses came into force, it was officially approved as a general training school. Over the years, many nurses trained at this school have commenced successful careers and have carried out sterling work, both at home and abroad.

Hemel Hempstead General Hospital continues to thrive, and over the forthcoming year will develop its services to meet the needs of local people by providing a first class service closer to their home. In 2008 a new urgent care centre opened at Hemel Hempstead General Hospital offering patients more efficient treatment for a minor illness or injury.

From spring 2009 a significant redevelopment programme will also begin at Hemel Hempstead General Hospital, which will considerably improve the general environment for patients. A new GP-led health centre will also open its doors, later in 2009.

Throughout the past two centuries the hospital has been part of the lives of the people of Hemel Hempstead town and the surrounding areas. During this time, the buildings and the services have changed and developed, but one thing has remained consistent throughout – the dedication and professionalism of the hospital staff and their

commitment to providing the best possible healthcare to the people of Hemel Hempstead.

Turn the page to see a chronological history of some of the key events in the life and times of Hemel Hempstead General Hospital.

Inside news

Hemel Hempstead General Hospital timeline from 1826 to 2014

Message from the Chairman

West Hertfordshire Hospitals **NHS**
NHS Trust

Trust Offices

Hemel Hempstead General Hospital
Hillfield Road
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP2 4AD

February 2009

Dear Colleague,

There are many important developments happening within the Trust this year and I am keen to ensure that those with respect to Hemel Hempstead General Hospital are appropriately commemorated.

This newsletter celebrates the many developments initiated by the hospital since the beginning of the 19th century. You will also receive a short film featuring staff from Hemel Hempstead General Hospital talking about the hospital, both past and future.

Both these items recognise and pay tribute to the tremendous work and professionalism that Hemel Hempstead staff have continually shown over many years and they place in context the developments which the hospital will now undertake.

For those of you who will remain at Hemel Hempstead I know you will ensure that the services to be provided by the hospital, as the Primary Care Trust develops Hemel Hempstead as a local general hospital, are of the highest quality. For those of you moving to either Watford or St Albans, the skills you have acquired at Hemel Hempstead will be warmly welcomed in your new environment.

To each of you, I wish every success in your new role.

With all best wishes,

**Professor Thomas Hanahoe
Chairman**



Aerial view of Hemel Hempstead General Hospital 1937

Hemel Hempstead General hospital's historical timeline from 1826 to 2014

1826

The first hospital in Hemel Hempstead opened thanks to a local man called Sir Astley Cooper, who was a surgeon to King George IV. He rented an old row of cottages at Piccotts End and turned them into an infirmary. The infirmary served all the districts of Bushey to Tring and out to Redbourn, Harpenden and St Albans.



PICCOTTS END.
(Now HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HERTS.)

1877

The building, known today as the Main Block was opened by Princess Mary, Duchess of Teck, mother of Queen Mary. This new building housed 50 patients, with rooms for seven nurses. At this time, Cheere House was let to Kings College Hospital as a convalescence home.

1800's

1914

During the First World War Windsor wing opened extra beds for sick and wounded soldiers.



1926

The Prince of Wales laid the foundation stone for the new Marnham ward.



1939

A children's ward opened just prior to World War II being declared.



1948

The launch of the National Health Service saw the two hospitals of west Hertfordshire amalgamate under the name of Hemel Hempstead General Hospital.

1900's

1959

The Queen Mother opened a new block of 58 beds and an outpatients department at West Herts wing.



1968

A coronary care unit was built onto the Rutherford ward, the male medical ward at St Paul's Wing.



1952

Owing to the growth of the town, a development programme began to both wings. West Herts wing became the main site for surgery and outpatients and St Paul's a medical unit which dealt with all maternity cases requiring hospital treatment.

1946

Cheere House reverted to hospital property when it became a nurse's training school and nursing accommodation.



1967

A play centre was opened following an appeal by the Mayor of Hemel. It provided a valuable service caring for small children of the patients and relatives.

1970

Over the next 10 years, West Herts wing continued to develop including the opening of a recovery ward, a new antenatal clinic and an extension to the X-ray department, which upgraded the department from two rooms to five.

1992

Following extensive renovations, Cheere House reopened and developed into a Postgraduate Medical Centre and doctors residence.



1988

An electrical fire started and quickly spread through Cheere House. The roof was badly burnt in several places and the building was set to be demolished. However, following pressure from medical staff it was agreed that Cheere House would be restored and refurbished into a new Postgraduate Centre.

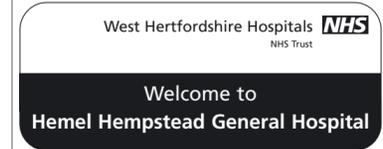


2008

An Urgent Care Centre opened treating patients who have minor injuries or illnesses that need to be dealt with quickly, but whose condition is not life threatening, such as cuts, bites, fractures, sprains and strains.

2004

St Albans and Hemel Hempstead and Mount Vernon and Watford General hospital Trusts amalgamated to become West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, as it is known today.



2009

A significant redevelopment programme begins, including the redesign and relocation of the outpatient and therapy departments providing considerable improvements to the patient experience, as well as improvements to the general environment. A new GP-led health centre to open offering appointments 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



2000's

The future...

2014

West Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) leads on the development of a new purpose-built local general hospital for the people of Hemel Hempstead and surrounding areas. This building will house the services of a local general hospital and possibly others.



1831

The original infirmary in Piccotts End was not large enough to cope with the needs of the town. A new building was proposed by another local man, Sir John Sebright who undertook at his own expense of £13,000 to pay for a new building. This building was called West Herts Infirmary. Later the name changed to Cheere House, the name by which it is known today.



1899

The hospital acquired X-ray facilities, probably one of the first hospitals in England to do so.

1918

The hospital was too small for the growing needs of the district and a series of improvements began, including new nurses accommodation and installation of electric light and power.



1929

The hospital continued to develop over the next ten years, a chapel came into use, operating theatres were added and a private ward and an extension to the X-ray department were opened.

