



THE CONCORDIANS NEWSLETTER ISSUE 3 AUTUMN 2024

Bringing together past and present staff of the hospital to share and exchange experiences in a collegial, supportive and relaxed atmosphere.

Our Mission is to embrace and articulate the origins and history of the hospital, to promote its unique culture of communications and compassion and to nurture and support our members

Farewell to Peter Haertsch



On 16 February, many Concordians joined other well-wishers to celebrate the retirement of our ex-president, Associate Professor Peter Haertsch AM, after more than 55 years of service to the hospital.

Peter Maitz, the current director of the Burns Unit gave Peter a very amusing and well received roast. He described Peter's remarkable achievements in firstly establishing Concord's Emergency Department and then with Peter Kennedy and Alf Lewis developing our internationally recognised Burns Unit and integrating it into the NSW Burns Service. In addition to leading the Burns Unit, Peter developed large plastic surgery practices in both Sydney and Wollongong and became one of only two surgeons in Australia to specialise in gender reassignment surgery. Over 40 years Peter's propensity for hard work has earned him the nickname of "Hurricane Haertsch".

Professor Maitz described how Peter has never been a one dimensional person. While engrossed in surgery he has found time to relax at his dairy farm at Albion Park and has developed interests in farming, bee-keeping, photography, welding and drone piloting. More recently he has become a champion for achieving fair milk prices for dairy farmers.

Thank you Peter for all your work for the Hospital and Concordians and have a great

Annual General Meeting 2024

Invitation

The Concordians AGM and Dinner

To be held on

When: Friday 10 May 2024, 6:00pm

Where: Club Five Dock, 66 Great North Road, Five Dock

Members: \$70 per head

Non-Members: \$80 per head

RSVP

By: 1 May 2024

Bookings and Credit card payments at:

<https://www.theconcordians.com/events-and-agm/>

Or RSVP to:

theconcordians@outlook.com (T) 0488 488 287

P.O. Box 3116 Wareemba 2046

Direct debit payments to:

The Concordians Inc BSB: 062 145 Account: 10396352



Please forward any agenda items to Alice Kang at theconcordians@outlook.com by 1 May.

The AGM will be followed by our annual dinner and a presentation by Professors Pierre Chapuis and Ron Newland on :

The Concord Hospital Colorectal Cancer Registry

Concord Hospital's colorectal cancer database has recorded every case of bowel cancer treated in the hospital since 1971. The registry has led the field in Australia in the classification, staging and standardized reporting of colorectal cancer. This has helped in the evaluation of surgical techniques and the identification of clinical and pathological factors in patient survival. More than 200 peer reviewed publications and eight doctoral theses have used data from the registry. The registry has also established a new system of staging colorectal cancer, which has been adopted internationally.

Professors Pierre Chapuis, who has recently been appointed as an Honorary Consultant Emeritus by the hospital (see next page) and Ron Newland have maintained the registry since its earliest days and will speak about the challenges and achievements of Australia's longest running Cancer registry.

Professor Pierre Chapuis appointed as an Honorary Consultant Emeritus



Pierre Chapuis , who first worked at Concord as a senior research fellow for Professor Murray Pheils in 1979, has recently retired from clinical practice and has been appointed to the position of Honorary Consultant Emeritus.

Pierre was born in Fontainebleau France and spent his early years in Lyon and later Vietnam (French Indochina), arriving in Australia in 1952. He graduated in Medicine at the University of Queensland and trained as a general surgeon at the Royal Brisbane and Princess Alexandra Hospitals. Then followed time in specialist training in colorectal surgery as a post-graduate Fellow at St Mark's Hospital, London, the Centre Leon Bérard in Lyon and at Sydney Hospital . After coming to Concord, Pierre was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in Surgery at Sydney University and in 2014 he was promoted to be the Professor of Surgery and the Director of Postgraduate Surgical Education.

Over the last 45 years, Pierre has made significant contributions across the clinical, teaching, administrative and research work of the hospital. Pierre has had a key role in establishing the international reputation of the hospital's Colorectal Unit, which at last count had provided advanced surgical training for 67 surgeons from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, France, the USA, Singapore, Japan, Jordan, Israel and Iran. Pierre has also been the driving force in the maintenance of the hospital's renowned Colo-rectal cancer registry.

In 2020 Pierre was named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for services to medical education and colorectal surgery. In 2021 he was made Professor Emeritus at the University of Sydney.

We wish Pierre well in his retirement but , fortunately, he will continue to be an important part of the hospital community. His appointment as Honorary Consultant Emeritus means that he will continue in his roles supporting the ongoing care of the colorectal cancer database, the Concord Institute of Academic Surgery and the hospital's Higher Degree by Research candidates.

(thanks to SLHD)

30th Anniversary of the 113th AGH Chapel



March 6th marked the 30th Anniversary of the opening of the hospital's "new" ecumenical chapel.

When the hospital was established as the 113th AGH army hospital, a temporary wooden building was provided as a chapel. This was meant to aid the spiritual needs of the patients and staff (who were all classified by the Army as Anglican, Roman Catholic or "Other"). However, reflecting the divisions in Australian society at the time, the chapel was soon divided by a moveable wall into Catholic and Protestant ends. The "temporary" chapel served the hospital well until 1989 when a freak mini-cyclone hit Concord West and the building was demolished within a few minutes. Fortunately the old chapel's stained glass windows and other memorabilia survived and have been incorporated in the new building.

The new chapel was built through the efforts of the veteran community and particularly Padre David Hayes and was named the 113 AGH Memorial Chapel, in memory of the hospital's history. It is now open to people of all faiths as an oasis of peace and prayer in the middle of the hurly-burly of hospital life. It also hosts annual services to commemorate the sinking of the hospital ship Centaur (14 May, See Page 7 of this newsletter) and Vietnam Veterans' Day (18 August).

Continuing the long tradition of the Army Padres who were appointed in the first days of the hospital, the chaplains of the Pastoral Care Department are available to aid all patients, staff and visitors.

E M Lane Concordians' Museum—Update

Planning for the reopening of the museum is well underway with volunteers helping to curate the many items that have been collected for display. The museum will be in an expanded and refurbished space in the old Discharge Lounge, next to the cafeteria. It will also have an expanded emphasis on all aspects of Hospital life over the last 83 years.

If you are interested in becoming a museum volunteer, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Jan Bell on 0418410612 or at theconcordians@outlook.com

Concord Repatriation General Hospital: A March through History

This richly illustrated history of the hospital was commissioned by the Concordians to celebrate the Hospital's first 80 years. Its focus is on the work and life of the hospital's patients and staff particularly during the Army and Repatriation eras.

Copies are available through the Concordians' web site at <https://www.theconcordians.com/book-publication/>. Copies will also be available for purchase at the AGM for \$50.

CONCORD REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL: A MARCH THROUGH HISTORY
 DR GREG WATTERS

CONCORD REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL

Fig. 4.26: Tommy and Marie Conroy outside the shop, 1960s

Tommy's store was the scene of a footnote in Australian history. Ronald Ryan, the last person to be executed in Australia, was a habitual criminal who was serving an eight-year sentence in Pentridge Prison, Melbourne, for a series of robberies. In late 1965, together with fellow prisoner Peter Walker, he shot and killed Warden George Hodson while

The Arrest of Ronald Ryan

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to apply teachers, and the making of teaching positions.¹⁵ Truly pioneers, nursing had become a more sophisticated three-year course, with more than 1,000 hours of instruction and eight-week placements in the Royal Alexandra Hospital, 'Gangneong' (GSE's Hospital), and other hospitals at Blackdown Hospital for experience in paediatric and obstetric nursing. The large component of practical training is followed by a period of responsibility at an early stage of 18-20 years and by 1967 most year they complete weekly during evenings and night shifts with oversight by a small number of night supervisors.¹⁶

Fig. 4.3: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

They escaped to Sydney, and Walker, who had his boarding house under an assumed name, today's daughter to arrange blind dates for himself and Ryan. The 20-year-old daughter (who was not named, due to fear of underworld retaliation) was a student nurse at Concord, and they arranged to meet the next night at the main gate of the hospital. Photos of Ryan and Walker had been featured in the media and the nurse's mother recognised Walker as her former boarder. She informed the police, who then involved the nurse in their recapture plan.¹⁷

On the evening of 5 January 1966, plain-clothes police sergeant Del Fricker stood with the nurse at the gate, waiting for the criminals, while 50 heavily armed detectives had already taken up sniper positions or were pretending to stroll along Hospital Road. When Walker and Ryan did not show up on time, the operation was stood down and the nurse and Sergeant Fricker returned to No. 2 Nurses' Home. Eventually, the criminals arrived, 30 minutes late, and Ryan tried to contact the nurse by using a public phone box, but the police had disabled it. Ryan entered Tommy's and offered Tommy assistance (five cents) to use his phone. After failing to find the nurse, Ryan left the shop and he and Walker were grabbed by the police. A lengthy and violent struggle ensued in the middle of Hospital Road, during which Ryan drew his gun. Ryan was arrested, convicted of Hodson's murder, and sentenced to death.¹⁸

By the 1960s, executions were rare in most of the Western world, including Australia. There had not been a hanging in Victoria in 15 years, and many people assumed that capital punishment had been unofficially abolished. Despite this, the Victorian government of Sir Henry Bolte refused to commute Ryan's sentence, and his proposed execution drew massive and sustained protests throughout Australia.

Despite this, an enthusiastic team, including Vera Curtis, the Head of School, Cliff Buchanan, Director of Nursing, Brian Macaulay, the Director of Nursing at Blackdown Hospital, and Marie Wilkinson, Gene of Nursing of SAC, Hentybury Agricultural College, provided a wealth of letters to enable MGC to supply academic lectures to the students of Concord and Blackdown Hospitals, from 1962 onwards.

Student nurses took the boarding trip from Concord to the college initially in two vehicles, but this arrangement was abandoned when the buses complained of being out of place on country roads which had been assumed that the Republica vehicle of Collier Park Hospital. It was in a stipulated state, and not only did it occasionally break down but, in rainy weather, the top of the rear section leaked, leaving the students and their educators to cower into the front

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Fig. 4.211: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

Fig. 4.212: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

Fig. 4.213: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

Fig. 4.214: Tommy and Marie Conroy outside the shop, 1960s

Fig. 4.215: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

Fig. 4.216: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

Fig. 4.217: Student Nurses (left) and Staff (right) on board of hospital ship, 1940s

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Fig. 4.2

Hospital History—The Sinking of the Centaur.



The hospital foyer houses several items reflecting the hospital's history. Perhaps the most poignant are a stained glass window and an honour board commemorating the tragedy of the sinking of the hospital ship *AHS Centaur* on May 13 1942 while transporting an ambulance unit from Sydney to Port Moresby.

Despite having clear Red Cross markings indicating it was a hospital ship, the *Centaur* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine and sank within minutes. Two hundred and sixty eight lives were lost, while 64 were rescued.

Twelve nurses were on board and only one, Sister Ellen Savage survived. Despite severe injuries she returned to work at the 113th only three months after the sinking and continued to work here until demobilisation in 1946. Among those killed were ten nurses and two doctors who had recently been transferred from the 113th and the sinking had a severe effect on hospital morale. The stained-glass window in the foyer was unveiled in 1990 by Prime Minister Bob Hawke and a commemorative service is conducted by the hospital in the 113th AGH Memorial Chapel each May.

Lieutenant Sister Ellen Savage at the hospital's annual nurses' mess dinner, 1945



Vale

Penny Wills

Penny, who was the manager of the Hospital's pharmacy supply service for many years during both the Repatriation and State eras has recently passed.

Friends and colleagues have described Penny as a wonderful, warm and welcoming person who was always supportive both professionally and in personal matters. At work she was committed to ensuring that the hospital efficiently and safely provided our patients with a high quality pharmacy service. Outside of work she was a keen tennis player and had a large circle of friends and family

We offer our condolences to her loved ones.



Thank You:

The Concordians greatly appreciates recent generous donations from:

Jan Bell

Marianne Cummins

John Cullen

Jennifer Collins

Alice Kang

Donations to The Concordians help us to provide equipment and resources to the hospital.

Contact Us:

Please give us your news, stories and feedback

The Concordians can be contacted at theconcordians@outlook.com

Website

The Concordians website is undergoing a major revamp and is now able to accept digital payment for membership fees and functions. Visit us at: <https://www.theconcordians.com/>

Best Wishes until we meet again at the AGM on May 10

