

SPASM MUSEUM

Newsletter October 2020

Spasm HealthCare Museum Building 6 Victoria Rd Gladesville
No 1 gate house at the Crown Street bus stop on Victoria Road Gladesville



Our Zoom AGM was held on Monday September 28 at 1pm. Many thanks to our curator Gary for his assistance in facilitating this meeting. Thanks also for those who attended and to those who sent through their apologies. Our President Sandra and executive committee appreciate your interest in the museum. Your feedback and your support is so important especially during these challenging times. The combined report from President, Curator and Secretary was previously circulated to all members. The treasurer's report was also provided, the moneys collected to date will help us over the next period when our income is greatly affected by Covid as we do not give any tours or have public admissions.

We have had a record number of 5 life members join us last year. A special welcome to our latest Member Dr. Kerry Moroney OAM, recently retired procedural specialist from Narrabri & to our latest Life Member - Dr. Madonna Grehan, Honorary Fellow, Nursing, School of Health Sciences, the University of Melbourne.

It was agreed at the AGM to continue with our monthly Zoom meetings on the fourth Monday of each month in lieu of opening the museum, as this gives a great opportunity for members to connect with each other. Please contact Ros or Gary.

Committee members continue to visit the museum on a weekly basis to ensure the collection is safe and to continue the important job of cataloging donated items, like the ones donated by Gordon Stenning earlier this year. You would be most welcome if you would like to assist in this vital task. Our covid safe plan is in place.

Over the page. A further 4 of the plant stories from our tablecloth, which was highlighted last month. All the stories of medicinal plants depicted on the tablecloth can be found in a folder at the museum. References for the information provided is at the foot of page 2.

October 2020



Last years AGM a reminder of pleasant times to come



Gordon Stenning with three items he donated to the museum earlier this year.



Although closed to the Public our doors remain open to members.



ALOE VERA



ROOT GINGER



LEMON/LIME

Some of the other plants depicted on the tablecloth



Next month will highlight our library collection and some of the wonderful texts we have at the museum.

Visiting the HealthCare Museum in real time or online.

Opening hours for the Museum is normally 11 am – 3pm on the 2nd Saturday and 4th Monday of each month - February to November. **The museum will be closed to the public until further notice. Members are welcome to attend on specific days as organised with individual volunteer Guides.**

Executive Members : President Sandra Solarz
Curator Gary Klopfer
Secretary /Treasurer Ros Berryman
Volunteer Guides: Val Corcoran, Kate Paton, Margaret Warby & Peter Hartigan

Contact SPASM by-Phone 0414 993 138

Email : info@spasmmuseum.org.au

SPASM web sites at www.spasmmuseum.org.au

[Facebook page "Discover HuntersHill"](#)

Like us on Facebook: [Society for the Preservation of Artefacts of surgery and medicine SPASM](#)

Entry to the Museum takes you to another era:

BUILDING 6

Room 1 takes us to a 1911 Consulting room: “**The consulting room of Dr. John Sand Smyth**” who practiced in Warwick Queensland. Items from the Five Dock GP Dr. Menzies collection are also in the large display case.

Room 2. The surgical “pick room” contains instrument cupboards with a large display of surgical instruments, blood collecting apparatus and interesting items. We will be adding a selection of orthopaedic instruments and prostheses.

Room 3. The St Thomas Hospital Operating Theatre Room In Feb 2020 had a new ceiling installed, and a new display is being set up in this area. The early operating table, as well as early anaesthetic equipment will be on show again we plan to add early surgical equipment to this display.

Room 4. The haemostasis room is home to: an impressive collection of diathermy machines as well as other methods used to provide haemostasis, such as tourniquets, clamps, suturing, bone wax and other medical means.

The corridor to the exit will take you past a display of hearing trumpets, tracheostomy tubes a display of early syringes and other historical equipment. We plan to add the portable operating table, and world war instruments to this area. The small formaldehyde cupboards and dental equipment will be on display as well as the small sterilizing water baths, one of which was used during Mawson's Antarctic Expedition.

The Library Work area. Will hopefully soon be a pleasant space for volunteers to gather, research and collate the many items still to be cataloged. The reference books and curator's files will be all in one space - a flat space so we wont be congregated outside the toilet with our chairs sliding down to the exit door!

BUILDING 1

The Anaesthetic Room which showcases the changes in anaesthetic apparatus used by surgeons, dentists and anaesthetists over the years displaying improvements in safety and monitoring of the anaesthetised patients over the years.

The pharmacy room shows beautiful jars, household remedies and also have some early dispensing records. A new optical collection will soon be added, as earlier pharmacists sold eye glasses according to our research.

The Corridor & Gladesville room gives a time line of the Tarban Creek Asylum - Gladesville Hospital. There are ECT machines, straight jackets, & mittens. There are photographs and stories from patients and attendants.

So it can be seen we have lots of plans and work to do Please consider assisting us we are there on various days these covid days so just contact Ros

In our second and final newsletter discussing medicinal plants we consider 4 of the plants, depicted on the tablecloth, that have been used for medicine through the ages. Those are:



Sweet Wormwood (*Artemisia annua*) several *Artemisia* species are used in cooking: Tarragon (*Artemisia dracuncululus*) is used to flavour sauces, while Common Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) gives the characteristic taste to absinthe. Sweet Wormwood has feathery leaves and a profusion of yellow flowers, and has been used for millennia in traditional Chinese medicine to treat malaria. The active ingredient, **artemisinin**, is part of the group of aromatic chemicals known as terpenoids, widely found in flowering plants. It acts to inhibit growth of other plants, stopping them using nutrients, which the Wormwood could itself use. Artemisinin was isolated as part of a Chinese research program in the 1970s, set up to screen thousands of chemicals to find a treatment for malaria. It acts by interfering with the cellular functions of the malaria parasite. Recently resistant strains of malaria have developed, and artemisinin is now only used in conjunction with other antimalarial drugs.



Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) is native to eastern and central North America, where it grows on prairie grassland. It has been used for centuries by Native Americans to treat various ailments, including coughs, toothache, sore throats and tonsillitis.

Echinacea has become popular in Western herbal medicine in the last 100 years. However, no active ingredients have been identified within *Echinacea*, and its effectiveness has not been proven. Many studies have aimed to investigate whether taking *Echinacea* preparations after the onset of symptoms of a cold can shorten the cold's duration. However, a review, in 2014 of these studies concluded that, although it seems possible that some *Echinacea* products are more effective than a placebo for treating colds, the overall evidence for clinically relevant treatment effects is weak. Additionally, trials investigating whether *Echinacea* can prevent colds have not shown any statistically significant effect.



Belladonna, (*Atropa belladonna*), also called **deadly nightshade**, tall bushy herb of the nightshade family, the source of the crude drug of the same name. The highly poisonous plant is a native of wooded or waste areas in central and southern Eurasia. It grows to about 1.5 metres (4–5 feet) tall and has dull green leaves, violet or greenish flowers in the axils of the leaves or in the forks of branches, sweet shiny black berries about the size of cherries, and a large tapering root Belladonna is cultivated in France and elsewhere for the medicinal alkaloids hyoscyamine, hyoscyne, (scopolamine) and atropine, which are used in sedatives, stimulants, and antispasmodics. Certain synthetic and semisynthetic derivatives—such as propantheline, glycopyrrolate, and methscopolamine—have been developed in order to circumvent the toxicity and undesirable side effects caused by the naturally occurring alkaloids in the dried leaves or roots.



Curare Vine. Curare is of botanical origin; its sources include various tropical American plants (primarily *Chondrodendron* species of the family Menispermaceae and *Strychnos* species of the family Loganiaceae). Preparations of curare have long been used as arrow poisons to capture wild game by the South American Indians. The name *curare* is the European interpretation of an Indian word meaning “poison”. In modern medicine, curare is classified as a neuromuscular blocking agent—it produces flaccidity in skeletal muscles by competing with the neurotransmitter acetylcholine at the neuromuscular junction. Acetylcholine normally acts to stimulate muscle contraction. The major outcome of that competitive activity is profound relaxation and paralysis. Appropriate, I believe, that we should end this plant series on this historic anaesthetic drug.

References; <https://www.britannica.com/science/curare>
<https://www.britannica.com/plant/belladonna>

Information from the University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic gardens <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/education-learning/trails/medicines/>

St. John's Health Care Museum
SPASM

SPASM Founded by Professor Ross Holland AM
1928 -2017