

# SPASM MUSEUM

Newsletter February 2022



Spasm HealthCare Museum, Building 6 Victoria Rd Gladesville  
Situating at the Crown Street bus stop on Victoria Road Gladesville



The Museum is open again for visitors and we are looking forward to the group bookings arranged for Monday March 21 Probus, Saturday April 9 Vintage Car Club and Monday May 23 Photography club. If any members are available on these days please come and join in the fun.

While we have been closed the termites have been busy again in building 6, but their latest exploits have ensured they were noticed and have been swiftly dealt with by Alex and the team. With a 12 month programme of testing and treatment put in place.

On NEXT Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February the Museum and our small Oral History collection kept in the Nurses Library will be featured in an Audiovisual presentation by Ros Berryman for the first Virtual Conference held by ACORN. The title of the presentation is "**Oral reflections can be Golden**" 6 oral histories (by Pat Solomon, Beryl Bentley, Pauline Walker, Val Corcoran, Marg Troy and Gayle Burr) are drawn on. The presentation focuses on the development the role of the Perioperative Nurse, changes of technology which has influenced the role, as well as staffing levels and of course nursing education. The Recovery room (or lack there of) as well as the humble surgical sponge are two topics frequently mentioned by perioperative nurses when they discuss their work life experiences during the 1950's. A copy of the presentation will be available at the museum. **I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Andrew Host from CD Makers Pennant Hills** for his assistance in embedding the voice of each of the subjects into the powerpoint presentation.

**Our Haemostasis room** in Building 6 contains historic and modern methods of preventing or containing haemorrhage. The main focus of this room are a number diathermy machines. Originally donated to the Museum by one company.  
More info pto

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Attendance at a Health Care Museum such as SPASM allows visitors to reflect on the past, to contrast with the present and contemplate the future.



Kate, Ros, Menna, Sandra and Peter are looking forward to welcoming new visitors to SPASM as we open up again in 2022.



A recent acquisition of a Valleylab Force FX demonstrates a more modern diathermy used in operating theatres. Kindly donated by Medtronic.

## Visiting the HealthCare Museum in real time or online.

Opening hours for the Museum is 11 am – 3pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month - February to November. Prior arrangements for small Group visits may also be arranged on these days, or other days -

### Executive Members :

President: Sandra Solarz

Curator : Gary Klopfer

Secretary /Treasurer: Ros Berryman

**Volunteer Guides:** Val Corcoran, Kate Paton, Kerry Moroney & Peter Hartigan

depending on volunteer availability.

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Email : [info@spasmuseum.org.au](mailto:info@spasmuseum.org.au)

SPASM web sites at [www.spasmuseum.org.au](http://www.spasmuseum.org.au)

Like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SPASM1>

We also feature on the Hunters hill web page:

<https://www.facebook.com/discoverhh>

# 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. Also The Five Dock GP "**Dr. Menzies collection**" is in the large display case at the back of the room.

**Room 2. The surgical "pick room"** contains instrument cupboards with a large display of surgical instruments, blood collecting apparatus and interesting items. There is a new orthopaedic display cupboard, not yet completed.

**Room 3 The St Thomas Hospital Operating Theatre Room** hosts an evolutionary display of receptacles used in the operating theatres. An early operating table, early surgical & anaesthetic apparatus, a display of ENT instrumentation, kindly donated by Dr. Jonathan Livesey, is now presented in this room. Three new large display cases allow us to put more surgical instruments on display in this room.

**Room 4 The haemostasis room** is also home to: an impressive display of diathermy units as well as other methods used to prevent bleeding during operations. Tourniquets, clamps, suturing material, bone wax, and more. Then there is the operating table, which was loaned for the filming of "**Wolverine**"

**The corridor to the exit** takes you past a display of hearing trumpets, tracheostomy tubes and other historical equipment. On the right we have new display cases. There are small formaldehyde sterilising cupboards, sterilizing drums, as well as small water bath sterilizers used at the South pole and during war time. The dental section shows 4 types of dental drills, including a **very old treadle drill**, used between 1890s and 1930's.

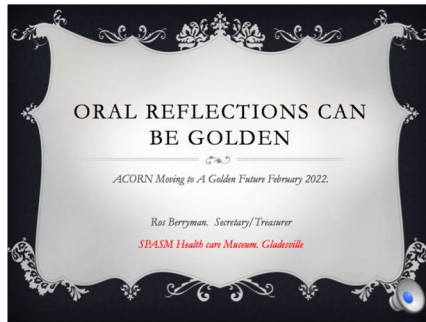


**The library work area** is now a pleasant place to sit & relax take tea and work on cataloging the many artifacts we have that have not been entered into the computer. We also have to add new books & cabinets to the database.

**Building 1 The Anaesthetic Room.** Showcases the changes in anaesthetic apparatus used by surgeons, dentists and anaesthetists over the years. Look for: the ventilator, which has bicycle gears as part of its internal mechanism.

**The pharmacy room** shows beautiful jars, household remedies and also some early dispensing records. An optical collection has been added.

**The Corridor and Gladesville Room** gives a time line of the Tarban Creek Asylum- Gladesville Hospital. There are ECT machines, straight jackets and mittens, photographs and stories from patients and attendants, as well as religious artifacts used at Gladesville during services held at the hospital.



This impressive range of **Electrocautery Machines** date from very early spark gap apparatus prior to 1920s. Brands such as Korona, Birtcher, Bovie, and Valleylab to our most recent acquisition donated by Medtronic a FORCEFX-8CS.

There are a number of "patient plates": a large table sized mat, a large metal plate and the smaller "stick-on" plate similar to those used today. There are also many different styles of "diathermy pencils" and "diathermy forceps" on display. In a small cabinet there are other methods of control of blood loss for example: **Artery forceps** used to clamp and control bleeding arteries. There are also **needles, sutures and of course various needle holders** used to tie off bleeding vessels. **Bone wax** smeared on bleeding bone surfaces. The bees wax and a softening agent, such as vaseline, blocks the holes and forms a mechanical barrier to seal the wound. In 1885 Horsley used bone wax composed of 7 parts bees wax, one part almond oil and 1% salicylic acid.

**Ergometrine /oxytocin** are both drugs used to prevent or control post partum haemorrhage during the third stage of labour. Oxytocin is the recommended uterotonin drug for the prevention of PPH, commonly defined as blood loss of 500ml or more within 24 hours after birth. According to the World Health Organisation PPH is associated with nearly 1/4 of maternal deaths globally and the leading cause of maternal mortality in low income countries.

Then of course there is the humble **Surgical Sponge**. Once surgical sponges were actually marine sponges. One of our early text books: "Practical Nursing," published in 1944, describes how marine sponges were stored in glass jars in a solution of 1:20 carbolic acid. Before the operation they were removed from the jar with a pair of sterilized forceps and thrown into a basin of warm water to get rid of the carbolic acid. They are then squeezed out with the gloved hand and placed in a bowl of saline solution from which they are taken by the surgeon as required. When they became saturated during the operation the surgeon threw them into a bowl of sterile water. The nurse wearing sterilized rubber gloves squeezed them, until clean, in a weak solution of washing soda or water and replaced them into the original bowl. After aseptic surgery if there was "no pus or foul wound", we were assured that the sponges may be used again!

Most operating theatres in the 60's and 70's were no strangers to the **washing machine**. (seen in this photo at Hurstville) Reusable cotton sponges were washed prior to sterilising in steam sterilisers. Now, of course, all sponges are single use. They have radiopaque strips to ensure they can be detected on Xray. Long Tapes secured to the corner of each sponge were previously positioned to dangle outside the body cavity with a haemostat attached – a method to ensure they were not left inadvertently in the wound - as the haemostats, if nothing else, were counted. But invariably the tape would tangle in the wound – especially during bowel surgery - causing damage. So tapes were removed.



**Corporate Members of SPASM**

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**NSW Nurses Association**

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*Health Care Museum*  
**SPASM**

Founded by Professor Ross Holland AM 1928 - 2017