

Newsletter February 2026

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



We started the New Year with a lovely group visit from the Balmain East Mixed Probus Group organised by Margaret Orpwood. Thanks to Peter, Kate, Kerry & John who were guides. Marion and Sue did us proud in the tearoom. Helen and Maureen from the Ryde Historical society also joined us and were available for those who were interested in discussing the cemetery at the side of the Museum.



Visiting the HealthCare Museum in real time or online.

Opening hours for the Museum are 11 am – 3pm on the 2nd Saturday and 4th Monday of each month - February to November. Prior arrangements for small Group visits may also be arranged on other days – depending on volunteer availability.

Executive Members :

President: Sandra Solarz.

Co Curators : Gary Klopfer & Peter Hartigan.

Secretary /Treasurer: Ros Berryman

Volunteer Guides: Val Corcoran, Kate Sauer, Kerry Moroney, John Murphy & Peter Hartigan

Fire Warden: Kerry Maroney.

Email : info@spasmmuseum.org.au

Contact SPASM by phone 0414993138

SPASM web sites at www.spasmmuseum.org.au

Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SPASM1>

We also feature on the Hunters hill web page:

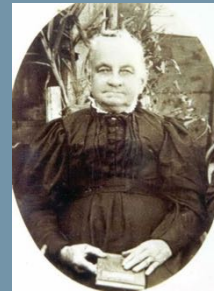
<https://www.facebook.com/discoverhh>

And the Museum and galleries of NSW website:

<https://mgns.org.au/organisations/spasm/>

February 2026

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.



2 of 4 Early Matrons of Tarban Creek /Gladesville Asylum. – More about them on page two and on our website

**A BIG Thank you to the Balmain East Mixed Probus Group
For their company at the
SPASM Tour
February 2026 at Gladesville**

Entry to the Museum takes you to another era:

Building 1

The Corridor gives a time line of the Tarban Creek Asylum - Gladesville Hospital.

1. The Ross Holland Anaesthetic Room. Showcases the changes in anaesthetic apparatus used by surgeons, dentists and anaesthetists over the years.

2. The Anne Jaumees Operating Theatre circa 2000 has a "new" op table, mayo stand, anaesthetic machine and endoscopic tower. All items were donated by Canterbury Hospital.

3. The Pharmacy room shows beautiful jars, and bottles, household remedies and also some early dispensing records. There is also an optical collection and some straight jackets to view.

4. The New 2025 Display area has the large EEG machine and multiple ECT machines on display along with historical ECG equipment. Also a Special tribute to the SA Both Bros who invented early ECG equipment.

Building 6

Room 1 is set up as 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 back. The 1936-2006 instruments of GP **Dr. Leslie Bruce Johnson** are also in this room.

Room 2. The surgical "pick room" contains instrument cupboards with a display of surgical instruments, sutures and blood collecting apparatus.

Room 3 The St Thomas Hospital Operating Theatre has a display of receptacles used in the operating theatres as well as an early operating table, early surgical instruments as well as ENT, obstetric, and general instruments. A timeline is provided for innovations. The early challenges of pain, sepsis & blood loss are explained.

Room 4 The haemostasis room 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 1930's operating table, a swab rack, a large print photo of RNSH Thoracic Theatre Nurses C1954. Plus our 2024 acquisition the Sigmamotor heart lung pump machine.

The corridor to the exit takes you past a display of hearing trumpets, tracheostomy tubes and other historical equipment. There are small formaldehyde sterilising cupboards, sterilizing drums, as well as small water bath sterilizers used at the South pole! The dental section shows 4 types of dental drills, including a **very old treadle drill**, used between 1890s and 1930's. Our 2023 exhibit the C1920's Ritter-Biber X-ray machine takes pride of place at the end of the Corridor.

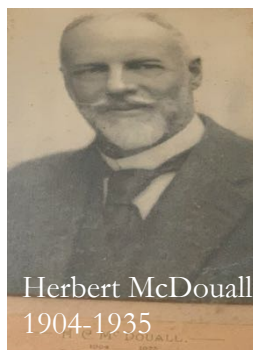
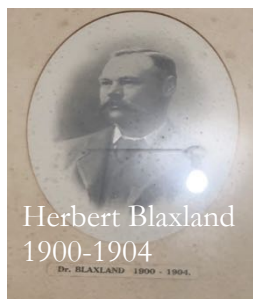
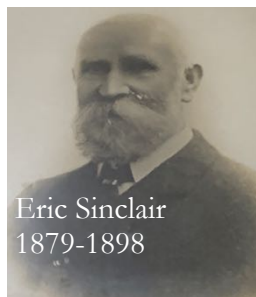
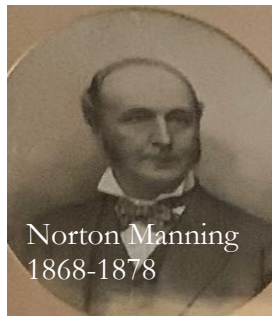
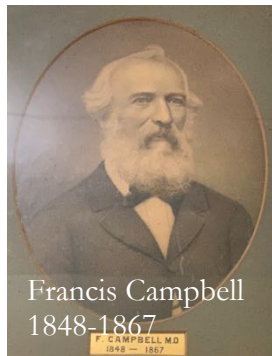
The library work area is now a pleasant place to sit & relax take tea and work on cataloging the many artifacts we have that have not been entered into the computer.

The World War I & II area is now complete with its large photograph of Casualty Clearing Station Operating Theatre in France and instrument sets used during both wars.

Building 5

The Tea Room for group tea or coffee

The Gladesville room The staff bundy clock, and religious artifacts used at Gladesville during services: a very old bible; church organ & pew. There are photographs and some stories about past patients and attendants, as well as literature about the past history of the asylum, Including the Ryde Historical book about the burial site at the museum.



These are the photographs of the first 5 medical superintendents of Gladesville hospital. Their photographs are on display at the museum. They have contributed to the history of the Hospital. It is excellent that we have those photographs to remind us of the person behind the names that have been recorded in the history of Tarban Creek /Gladesville hospital. Yet gazing at these lovely old photographs I was reminded that the first Superintendent – Joseph Thomas Digby was not memorialized in this picture gallery. Nor were there any hint or record of the early Matrons or Nurses who were responsible for the day to day care of the female patients at the Asylum. So I began to research the matter and have written a "short" 10,000 word essay on a few of those early women - their lives and conditions that they worked within at the Tarban Creek, Gladesville Asylum. I have searched in vain for any photograph of Joseph, his wife Susannah - Matron from 1838-1847, Jane Manson Matron from 1851-1873, Sister Mary Bland Matron from 1873-1881 and Sister Bessie Simpson (nee Chant) Matron from 1881 -1908. There are however a couple of newspaper photographs published of Bessie and Jane in their old age. If you are interested you can read more about them in the paper that I have written. Published on our web site in the newsletter section. Just copy and past this name into Google. www.spasmmuseum.org.au and check out the newsletter heading.

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