

St Martin's House legacy celebrated at centenary celebrations



St Martin's War Memorial Hospital nurses and a clergyman in the 1930s

The centenary of the opening of St Martin's War Memorial Hospital, now St Martin's House, was celebrated in late November. All those connected with St Martin's House were invited to gather and share their stories. Among the 200 people who attended were old friends who caught up for the first time in many years. All rejoiced in the chance to reminisce in the part they have played in the heritage-listed building's legacy.

In 1922, Governor-General Sir Henry Forster opened the new war memorial hospital. For the recent centenary celebrations,

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM recounted the story of the hospital's establishment and the terrible toll that the First World War took on Queensland's young men. Building a war memorial hospital was a way for the Queensland community to remember those who died and to provide for those who returned from active service and needed care.

The Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent ran the hospital for the 50 years it operated. Lin Cox, a nurse at St Martin's from 1962 to 1966, spoke warmly of the life-long friendships she made while undertaking training at the hospital. Lin described her four years of learning under the guidance of Sister Joan and Sister Dorothy as a very positive and happy experience.

“We worked hard in very spartan conditions, no luxuries, but we were treated fairly. I always felt safe and nurtured, and certainly proud when I received my registration as a registered nurse. I will always be grateful to Sister Joan for my nursing life,” Ms Cox said.

In addressing those present, Sister Gillian Gardiner SSA shared a prayer of thanksgiving for the foresight of those who established the hospital, for the fundraising committees and benefactors, the matron, the nurses, the doctors, patients, and the Society of the Sacred Advent that the hospital was a going concern for around 50 years, and for all those associated with St Martin’s over its 100 years, especially those connected to it today.

The continued caring and support provided today from St Martin’s for the Cathedral community and beyond were outlined by Kelly Houston (Parish Support Officer, Finance and Diocesan Services Commission) and Judy Fay (Community Development Coordinator, St John’s Cathedral).

Following the formalities, past nurses, medical staff, patients and their families spent time sharing stories about their part in the heritage of St Martin’s House.

One of these was Ian Campbell who was a patient from 1965 to 1967 and his wife, Ann, whose father was a patient at the same time. Ian and Ann met at the hospital and have now been married for 53 years. Ian was delighted to meet up with Margaret Peel, the physiotherapist who helped him recover from his very serious injuries.

During the recent centenary celebrations, the St Martin’s House corridors were filled once again with nurse chatter as tours were conducted to the top-floor operating theatre and the old ground-floor wards – now the staff kitchen, music room and Darnell Room.



The foyer of St Martin’s War Memorial Hospital, now St Martin’s House