

History of Highland Hospitals

Rosedene 2 Drummond Crescent



Rosedene's first use as a care establishment was to look after infantsⁱ whose mothers could not cope. In 1916, the Scottish Mothers Unionⁱⁱ had opened the Northern Counties Infant Home at 106 Castle Street under a matron with Dr John Macdonald, Medical Officer of Health, as honorary medical officer. It accommodated six infants up to one year old and was staffed by young girls being trained in child care. It received a grant from the Burgh and charged 5/- per week, admitting patients free where they could not pay. The training of girls was quite formal and, by the 1930s, the Rosedene School of Nursing was advertising training sessions costing £20 with quarterly intakes. It noted that most trainees obtained posts on leaving.¹ Demand was high and, around 1918, it moved to larger premises in the Old Collegeⁱⁱⁱ in Ardross Street. By the early 1920s, the home had 12 babies and five girl trainees in child care.

ⁱ The Highland Orphanage opened in 1882/93 at 71 Culduthel Road. In the early 20th century it contained around 70 children. It did not admit infants.

ⁱⁱ Formed in 1889, it was mainly Episcopalian and Church of Scotland mothers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Now Highland Council HQ, the Northern Counties Collegiate College opened in 1873 and in 1921 became the Inverness Royal Academy War Memorial Hostel.

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The Home required more space and the situation was solved when Mrs Frances Lilian Day of Hilton House donated Rosedene as a memorial to her own daughters and, in 1923, the new home was opened by Lady Mackenzie of Gairloch for 20 infants. It was normally quite full. In 1928, 7 came from Ross and Cromarty, 2 from Sutherland, 2 from Moray, 3 from Inverness-shire and 6 from Inverness and, by the 1930s, it had up to nine staff. The local authority gave an annual grant and councillors sat on its committee. Honorary physician was Dr Janet Fraser. Children usually left around 3 or 4 years old to return home or to be adopted. In 1939, its capacity was 25 children accommodating 22 on average and it had assets of just over £3,000. By then, it was known as the Rosedene Baby Home.² The photograph above from 1930 shows Matron, Mrs MacLennan, with the entire staff, trainees and infants.

In 1940, progress was halted when, due to wartime needs, Rosedene was requisitioned as a maternity hospital and leased to the Inverness Burgh and County Joint Hospital Board on a yearly basis at £150 p.a. with the proviso that it be returned to the Trustees a year after the war ended. At that point, the children had to return home or be adopted.³

In 1939, Dr TN MacGregor, obstetrician, and Medical Officer of Health, Dr Fraser, arranged the conversion of Rosedene to a 16 bed maternity

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hospital with delivery room and operating theatre. It cost around £1,000, partly met by the Department of Health. Rosedene received its first patient on 15th March 1940 and, in May, was formally opened by Lady Hermione Cameron of Lochiel. It was Highland's first maternity hospital and was reserved for 'difficult or abnormal cases of confinement' requiring 'highly specialised medical or surgical aid' thus complementing rather than supplanting local nursing homesⁱ such as Rossal and St Margaret's.⁴ Patients, who were charged 3 guineas per week, came from the Northern Counties and Moray & Nairn. The Inverness Joint Hospital Board initially thought that, along with the Ida Merry Home, it would provide 'adequate maternity services for the whole of the North of Scotland' which says much about local authority thinking and public expectation at the time.⁵

The layout of the building was difficult. Clinics and administration were on the ground floor and the four small wards were on the upper floors. A former nurse recalls 'We had no lift and this meant we had to carry women up and down stairs on stretchers.' The operating theatre was also used as an infants' nursery. Heating was by open fire and laundry was sent out. It was staffed by matron and 4 midwives during the day and 2 at night. There were 4 domestic staff. Staff lived in but accommodation was 'cramped and unsatisfactory'. Matron and sisters had attic rooms and others small cubicles. Later some staff stayed at the Infirmary.⁶

Dr MacGregor was based at Rosedene initially and immediately set up out-patients clinics which, by 1941, had at least 100 attendees per month. The following year, gynaecological clinics started at the RNI and Raigmore which also had antenatal clinics. There were 352 admissions in the first year and numbers grew quickly. On average, 13 beds were occupied but, at times, there were up to 20 patients and such levels

ⁱ A maternity hospital differed from a maternity home in the degree of medical services and staffing available. However, the distinction may be more apparent than real. Some nursing homes - like maternity hospitals - had surgical facilities with trained staff and surgeons on call.

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continued throughout the 1940s. Around 75% of cases were from Inverness Burgh and County.⁷

By late 1940, the hospital was full being too small for the rising demand and some patients were sent to the Ida Merry Home but, by 1941, it was running down. Other nursing homes were approached and attempts were made to acquire additional accommodation including Carrol Nursing Home, Eden Court and Ach an Eas, then occupied by the army, but to no avail. Eventually, by mid-1946, there was an arrangement with Rossal Nursing Home to take local authority maternity cases.

When the War ended, the Rosedene trustees affirmed their intention to sell it. This prompted urgent discussions with the Department of Health which resulted in the conversion of one ward at Raigmore into maternity. In 1946, a new build at Eden Court had been recommended but, in 1951, further Raigmore Maternity Wards were converted and Rosedene patients were transferred there in mid-April.⁸

Rosedene Matrons⁹

1940	Miss M Doull.
1940-9	Miss Isabella Nixon.
1949-51	Miss Campbell. Transfers to Raigmore with patients.

Despite requiring substantial upgrading, the health board considered Rosedene as a nurses' home and also as their HQ before returning it to its Trustees in 1952.ⁱ The photograph on page 1 dates from around this time. The 1948 Children's Act had made local authorities responsible for any child who could not be cared for by its parents and Rosedene was purchased by Inverness County and opened in 1953 as the Northern Counties Children's Home accommodating 30 children from both the

ⁱ Rosedene funds were apparently split equally between the Infirmary, Orphanage, Isobel Fraser Homes, Forbes Dispensary and Queen's Nursing Association. In 1952, the Forbes Dispensary Trust was anticipating its share of the residue of Rosedene.

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Burgh and County.ⁱ In 1968, it was taken over by the newly formed Social Work Department and continued as a children's home until the early 1980s, later becoming a women's refuge, a business centre and later a spa and dental clinic.

References

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- ⁴ Inverness Courier 23 April 1940, 29 April 1997 the latter per Mrs D Paterson
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- ⁷ Inverness Joint Hospital Board Minute 14 November 1946: Department of Health file National Records of Scotland
- ⁸ Inverness Town Council minutes 8 June 1942: Inverness Joint Hospital Board administration papers: Scottish Hospital Survey (1946) *op.cit.*
- ⁹ Inverness Joint Hospital Board Minutes: The British Journal of Nursing September 1940: Northern Region Health Board Chairman's Committee 30 June 1949

ⁱ Until then, children were still being placed, albeit infrequently, in Muirfield.