

The New Nairn Town and County Hospital Cawdor Road 1906



Nairn Town and County Hospital 1906

Raigmore Archive

By the end of the 19th century, Nairn Town & County Hospital building was well past its best and a committee was formed in 1899 to consider the whole question of hospital accommodation. The 1901 annual report considered the building ‘antiquated in construction and equipment’ and a hope was expressed for a new hospital.¹ At the Annual General Meeting of 1902, it was agreed to pursue a new building and a committee of ladies to publicise the financial needs of the hospital was formed. By then, donations were being received for the new building.

In 1903, a public appeal was underway when the costs of the building, £4,000, were offered by Mr Alex Mann of Guayaquil, Ecuador who made the donation the following year.² ‘He did this with the wish that his name would appear nowhere on the hospital; not even a plate (plaque) was to be inscribed with his name inside the building’. However, he was not reclusive and his generosity to this and other community concernsⁱ was well appreciated by the Nairn public at the time. He involved himself in

ⁱ For example, at Christmas 1905, he financed gifts of coal, oatmeal, tea and sugar to 100 of Nairn’s most needy as chosen by the church ministers.

arrangements for the new hospital. He wrote that he was due to return home and, according to the managers' wishes, would either supervise the hospital build or just donate the money. He stipulated that it be named Nairn Town and County Hospital and that 'no native of the town or county of Nairn, whilst a patient in said hospital, shall be considered as a recipient of charity, but that his or her residence therein shall be considered his or her inborn right'. He continued to donate 10 guineas annually for some years after.³

Alex Mann (1857-1916) was the third son of Nairn's former provost Alexander Mann. He left Nairn around 1878 to train as an engineer in the Inverness locomotive workshops. He emigrated to Ecuador via England and established a large business employing many and which included importing machinery. He donated a Christmas treat for Nairn poorhouse residents for several years and funded a new bell for the parish church. In 1903, he co-founded the general Hospital de Niños Alejandro Mann in Guayaquil, later a paediatric hospital and later renamed the Dr. Roberto Gilbert Elizalde Children's Hospital. He retired to Welcombe, Hatherly Road, Kew Gardens where he died.

The Directors worked with Mr Mann to find a site, initially choosing one on Merryton Hill next to the railway bridge but later Mr Mann purchased outright, for £1,000, a four acre site of Millbank land at the Market Stance on Cawdor Road. By May 1904, the preparatory work had been done on the site and the directors were ready to receive the £4,000 and start building, which duly happened. By 1906, the new 16 bed, pavilion style Town and County Hospital building on Cawdor Road was in place. The architect was William Mackintoshⁱ of Inverness⁴ and the trades are shown on the next page. They were local unless noted otherwise.

ⁱ William Mackintosh designed Nairn Post Office (1893) and the Parish Manse (1898) as well as many local houses and farm steadings.

Mason	Robert Squair	Plumber	Frances Wink
Carpenter	William Brooman	Painter	K Chisholm, Inverness
Slater	Alex Reid	Plasterer	Geo Gray, Elgin
Blacksmith	D Munro, Inverness	Drainage	Hugh Brown

There was a front door for patients and one for the public - each opening into a separate hall. The patients' hall opened into the surgery. The public hall led to the surgeon's, matron's and nurses' rooms. On the first floor there were the operating theatre and two large wards. There was a mortuary at the back.⁵

The hospital was unfurnished when it was opened by the Earl and Countess of Cawdor on Wednesday 15th August 1906.⁶ The problem was one of insufficient funds and the opening day - opened by Brodie of Brodie - was the start of a three-day fund raising bazaar which raised an impressive £1,470.⁷ The bazaar had a long list of patrons and stalls were organised by a veritable *Who's Who* of prominent local ladies including the Countess of Leven and Melville, the Countess of Cawdor, Lady Eleanor Brodie of Brodie and Dowager Lady Dunbar of Boath. Matron, Miss Wood, also ran a stall. Patients were eventually transferred from the old building in November.

Until 1903, the hospital had no ambulance. That year an 'old cab' was gifted by a local hirer and replaced, in 1907, by a specially adapted horse cab which could take a patient and attendantⁱ and was specially sprung to try to reduce the jolting which often badly affected patients being transported. It was handed over by Dr Cruickshank on behalf of an 'anonymous lady'. By 1920, this was showing its age. However, in 1916, a motor ambulance, the 'Nairn Town and County Ambulance' had been donated for the wartime use of the 51st Brigade on condition that it was returned for use by the hospital after the war. This duly happened and the redundant horse ambulance was then used by fever patients.⁸

ⁱ However, it apparently did not have rubber tyres (presumably wooden ones) and it was proposed fitting them at the 1913 AGM but we don't know if this happened.

Later, the Town and County had access to two ambulances. One was provided by the Red Cross and the hospital still had its own one for which patients were charged at 1 shilling per mile in the 1940s.⁹ In the late 1930s, the ambulance appears to have made fewer than 30 journeys per year. These were mainly to the Town and County with the occasional journey to Balblair Home or to the Royal Northern Infirmary although there were several journeys further afield such as to Aberdeen.

Nairn Hospitals Patients details 1907-1929

Year to 15 May	In	Out	Notes
1907	99	40	55 major operations
1908	111	55	¹⁰
1909	153	55	54 % of in-patients are surgical. 9 major and 20 minor operations.
1910	143	31	22 minor and 11 major operations. ¹¹
1911	129	33	59% of in-patients are surgical. 22 operations. Average stay 25 days. ¹²
1912	124	n/a	56% of in-patients are surgical. 9 major operations. ¹³
1913	152	26	
1914	137	29	19 major operations. ¹⁴
1915	106	26	54% of in-patients are surgical. 16 major and 25 minor operations. Average stay 24 days.
1916	118	22	32 operations.
1917	141	n/a	¹⁵
1918	121	40	¹⁶
1921	179	23	6 male and 4 female in-patients on census night (19 th June). Average stay 22 days ¹⁷
1923	139	28	74 operations. 24 private. Average stay 24 days. ¹⁸
1924	161	36	62 major operations. Average stay 25 days.
1925	151	23	
1926	166	28	55 major operations. Average stay 20 days. ¹⁹
1928	175	28	
1929	156	24	

In-patient numbers remained at 100-150 annually but were gradually increasing by the 1920s as were out-patient numbers (table above). The

table below gives an annual snapshot of how many beds were used which, were well below its capacity of 16 beds although it must be remembered that there would ongoing variations in admission numbers.

Number of in-patients in hospital on 15th May

1907	3	1912	12	1918	8	1927	9
1908	8	1913	11	1923	12	1937	14
1909	10	1914	10	1924	11	1938	8
1910	11	1915	6	1925	9	1939	12
1911	9	1916	4	1926	9		

In 1911, as well as matron, there were 3 nurses, maid, cook and porter/gardener resident on census night. It is likely that two of the nurses would have been probationers (trainees). 10 years later the census details one staff nurse and one probationer but, by 1923, this had increased to four nurses.²⁰ Local doctors continued to give their services free.

Nairn Hospital Income and Expenditure 1914-15

Income		Expenditure	
Subscriptions	33%	Food, medicines and dressings	47%
Church Collections	17%	Fire and light	12%
Parish Council payments	4%	Wages and Salaries	25%
Interest on investments	17%	Feu duties, rates and taxes	6%
Property rent	8%	Repairs and furnishings	2%
Private patients	21%	Other	8%

By the 1920s, many Scottish voluntary hospitals had large waiting lists although Highland hospitals were often underused, and, by the 1930s, many were struggling financially. This does not seem to be the case for Nairn which seems to have been a well-managed, prudently financed, voluntary hospital throughout its history. The hospital's finances seem to be typical of other local hospitals. As the table above shows, half the income came from the community either as subscriptions or regular church collections. The other half came from rent and interest – the result of past donations or legacies which were saved – but note the substantial amount which came from private patients who paid a fee for

an enhanced such as a separate ward. As it happened, the year to May 1915 saw an income of £580 exceeded by an expenditure of £693 the deficit being made up either by years of surplus or by eating into capital.²¹

However, it must be said that the managers did not invest heavily in facilities or attempt much ongoing expansion. The hospital seemed to progress quietly and steadily, except when there was the occasional need for improvement, often funded by a donation or fund raising event.

In 1907, Chairman JS Robertson handed over an X-ray machine on behalf of Lord Cawdor²² and, in 1913, two pavilions or sun parlours were donated in his memory.ⁱ There was one at each wing for male and female patients and they were intended for convalescent patients or as overflow from the wards. That year, central heating was installed.²³ The late 1920s saw an appeal for £1400 to upgrade facilities, in particular to instal electric light and upgrade the X-ray equipment, and there was much local fund raising. In 1928, the new X-ray machine was partly funded by a fete at Newton, now a hotel but then the home of Colonel Findlay.²⁴ In 1938, the hospital connected to mains electricityⁱⁱ and its redundant generating plant was sold.²⁵

Hospital finances were not always straightforward. In 1883, apparently through a legacy, the hospital acquired a bond over property at 15 Union Street and 54 & 56 Society Street Nairn. The bond was redeemable on a loan repayment but an attempted resolution in 1890 apparently failed. The hospital received rent on the properties from at least 1905 and, in the 1930s, had tenants at 54 & 56 Society Street (3 each), 3 Wilson Street (2 flats), 5 Wilson Street (2 flats) and 6 Wilson Street (4 flats). In 1938, 56 Society Street was condemned, the tenants being re-housed by the Town Council until the buildings were repaired.²⁶ By 1943, the properties were in a poor state and the Council wished to purchase and upgrade them. The hospital tried to resolve the bond with one of the two

ⁱ Lord Cawdor had died in 1911.

ⁱⁱ This seems late for an urban hospital.

remaining heirs but this was apparently unsuccessful and, by 1951, when the Council wished to partly demolish the Society Street house, the hospital board had no longer an interest. It had not received rent for years and the property now had squatters resident.

Finance seems to have been reasonably healthy in the 1930s with around £11,000 in investments.²⁷ Income and expenditure were each around £2,000pa with generally a surplus. However, costs were rising and, in 1937, expenditure exceeded income by around £700. Donations continued steadily and were mostly fairly small although there were some large ones (see table on page 10).

In 1931, £4,350 was received from the estate of Andrew Morisonⁱ of Northland, Waverley Road.²⁸ The hospital directors noted that a 'Midwifery Ward' had been proposed in the 1906 hospital but never implemented and they agreed to use the bequest for a maternity wing. By August that year, plans were drawn up and the building work started. However, costs were £5,460 and an 'Appeal for £1,800 for the 'Erection & Maintenance of Maternity Wards' was made. Although less than this was raised, the extension was opened in September 1932 by the Earl and Countess of Leven and Melville. The architect was Mr Bennett Mitchell of Aberdeen.²⁹ It consisted of a four-bed general ward, a private ward, a labour ward, night nursery, doctor's room, nurses' quarters and kitchen.³⁰

Maternity became particularly successful. The table on the next page shows births steadily increasing to 121 in 1947 when 53% of all Nairnshire births occurred in the hospital. The private ward attracted about 10 births per year and between 1936 and 1941 over 12% of maternity patients were from outwith Nairn, mainly from Moray. In 1946, an extension to the maternity ward was planned, and a legacy of £13,000 was received for that purpose but it does not seem to have been built.³¹

ⁱ He also left £1,483 each to Nairn Nursing Association and Nairn Convalescent Home.



Opening of Maternity Wing 1932

Hospitals often had long serving officers. In 1937, JS Robertsonⁱ resigned from the board after 50 years of service, 35 as chair. In 1948, Alexander Robertson retired having been secretary since 1891.³² When Dr Sclanders died in 1913, he had been medical officer for 50 years and Dr George Wilson, medical supervisor until at least 1945, died aged 80 in 1948 apparently still at work.

From the table on the next page it can be seen that in-patients numbers remained steady in the 1930s but increased post war. Elsewhere, out-patients numbers increase when specialist clinics start. No records have been found of specialist visits to Nairn but, elsewhere in the Highlands, these began in the 1930s. Nairn may have been later, however, because it was not part of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service which was instrumental in promoting specialist visits to cottage hospitals. By 1943, the new Raigmore Hospital's orthopaedic surgeon had monthly clinics

ⁱ John Stoddart Robertson was Cawdor estates factor from the 1880s. He was a Commissioner of Supply and when it merged with the County Council he became a councillor for 40 years, 28 as convenor. He chaired Cawdor and Ardersier Parish Council and School Board, Roses Academical Institute and Nairn Poorhouse Board. He was a Justice of the Peace and founder of Nairn Golf Club.

and, by the mid-1940s, 'surgical' included 15-20 orthopaedic patients per year. 50-60% of all operations were classified as 'major'. There were also tuberculosis clinics and, from 1945, ante natal and gynaecology. The hospital continued, on average, a little over half full and patients stayed around 18 days. There were 15-20 private maternity patientsⁱ per year who, in the 1940s, were charged 6 or 7 guineas per week, £1 more than non-maternity private patients.³³

Nairn Town & County: Patient Numbers 1930 - 1948

Year	Patients		Maternity	Surgical	Private
	In	Out			
30/31	213	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
36/37	214	79	62	95	22
37/38	215	123	71	76	26
38/39	203	170	70	76	30
39/40	200	128	89	66	24
40/41	204	143	85	83	14
41/42	192	119	101	99	34
43/44	n/a	n/a	97	83	13
44/45	167	183	117	90	24
45/46	218	296	87	88	16
46/47	258	390	121	104	44
47/48	276	317	142	65	51v

Private maternity is included in the overall maternity figures.

ⁱ Until the NHS, all maternity patients in hospitals were charged

Major Donations and Legacies

1906	300	Late Mr Donald Manson, New Zealand. ³⁴
1908	500	Anonymous donation. ³⁵
1909	500	Late Mr William Malcolm of Brackla Farm. ³⁶
1912	100	From Mr James Mackenzie and sisters in memory of their brother Provost Mackenzie. ³⁷
1913	100	Mr HA Clarke, Achareidh. ³⁸
1914	100	Miss Catherine Macdonald native of Easter Delnies. ³⁹
1915	1000	Mrs Brodie of Lethen endows the Lethen Bed in memory of husband Ewen James Brodie killed in action at Ypres. ⁴⁰
1916	666	Late Mr John MacArthur, Mountbury, Nairn. ⁴¹
1917	342	Late Mr John Innes, Newlands of Clune, Nairn. ⁴²
1918	200	In War Bonds from MR RL Mackintosh, Millbank, Nairn. ⁴³
1918	158	Residue of estate from Miss Bella Maclean, Achareidh. ⁴⁴
1918	100	Late John Walker, retired mariner, Glasgow. ⁴⁵
1919	500	Late Mr William Malcolm. Death of life-renter. ⁴⁶
1919	500	Late Mrs Turnbull, Lodgehill, Nairn. ⁴⁷
1925	100	Mr HA Clarke, Achareidh. ⁴⁸
1926	1000	Late Catherine Lothian Macandrew to endow a bed in memory of Lieutenant Ian Macandrew 1 st Seaforth Highlanders killed in action in WW1. ⁴⁹
1930	1000	Mr Charles Edward Law, Brackla to endow Brackla bed. ⁵⁰
1931	4350	Late Mr Andrew Morrison, Northend for maternity ward. ⁵¹
1931	100	Late Angus Corbett, water bailiff. ⁵²
1932	700	Sir Alexander Grant, Forres donates £100 p.a. over the next 7 years. ⁵³
1932	1000	Late Robert Torrie, retired farmer, Dyke. ⁵⁴
1932	432	Late Catherine Macdonald, sometime resident in Isobel Fraser Home, Inverness. ⁵⁵
1940	1000	Late Mrs Jessie Victoria Mackintosh, Kincorth, Forres. ⁵⁶

By the 1940s, running costs were rising steadily but increased income ensured that the hospital, on average, broken even financially. It is generally thought that voluntary hospitals lost donations when the prospect of nationalisation materialised. However, Nairn hospital continued to attract funding with ongoing subscriptions, church

collections and almost £2,000 in legacies in 1944-45 and over £3,300 in 1947-48 which lifted investments from around £14,000 in 1942 to over £23,000 at the hand over to the NHS in 1948.⁵⁷ It was common practice to donate money to 'endow' a bed.ⁱ Legacies endowed the 'Ranza' bed in 1944 and the 'James and Nina Helen Bonalla bed' in 1946. In 1945, a gift of £1,000 endowed the 'Mrs Mary Mackay of Glebe End, Nairn' bed.⁵⁸ Legacies made to the voluntary hospital were often realised by the new hospital board. In 1952, the property of Albert Villa which has been willed to the hospital in 1944 became empty and it was sold for £2,100.ⁱⁱ

In a report issued in 1946, the hospital was described as a small hospital in a two-storey stone building on a four acre site. There were 16 general beds in 6-bed wards or single rooms; a small operating theatre; five maternity beds; labour room; fixed X-ray unit; improved out-patient department; rather inadequate nurses' quarters; all main services; central heating; small hand laundry (some laundry sent out) and mortuary. The report recommended providing out-patient accommodation⁵⁹ and fund raising for this had started in 1945. In 1946, building started on facilities which included new X-ray, out-patient theatre and physiotherapy unit. The architects were JB Nicol, Aberdeen and, later, Mr Hall of the Health Board. The masons were Birnie of Aberdeen but Cruickshank the joiners, Burnett the slaters, and plumbers Tait and Ross were all from Nairn.⁶⁰ It cost £12,000, including £2,000 on X-ray facilities, and, after some delay, was opened in November 1950 by Colonel Cameron of Firhall.ⁱⁱⁱ The new out-patient facility was the first hospital building to be opened under the new Northern Region Health Board^{iv} but also the last main act of the voluntary trustee body which had run the hospital effectively for just over a century and, on 3rd July 1948, Nairn Town and

ⁱ For a substantial donation a bed would be named in honour of the donor.

ⁱⁱ Hospitals retained their endowment fund for some years although the regional health board attempted to even out the benefit across hospitals in the region.

ⁱⁱⁱ Col. Cameron followed Lord Leven as Chair of the hospital in 1947.

^{iv} In 1947 a plan to include Nairn within the North Eastern Health Board was successfully resisted. Grantown on Spey was not so successful and had to wait until the reorganisation of 1974 to come within the Highland Health Board.

County was handed over to the Northern Region Health Board in good heart and with sound investments.

Many doctors have been associated with Nairn Hospital. From 1847 on, the trustees normally appointed 3 local doctors as honorary medical officers one of whom was medical superintendent or supervisor. In the 1930s, Dr D MacDonald was medical supervisor, in the 1940s it was Drs Eric and George Wilson and, during the 1950s, first Dr Innes then Dr King held the post being replaced after his death by Dr MacFadyen in the 1960s. The move to a regional health service created adjustment difficulties for local GPs who formerly had a free hand in treating their patients. Patients admitted to Nairn hospital now came under the care of specialists and the hospital medical superintendent. From 1949, this caused some concern to local GPs when they could not see to their patients especially when admitted to the maternity ward.

From the late 1940s, the lack of hospital space meant that nurses were boarded at nearby Redheugh, a private house. The need for a nurses' home was noted in the 1948 annual report and an extension was planned soon after. However, it was not until May 1964 that a new seven bed nurses' residence, financed by endowment funds, was opened by Mrs Campbell of Auchindoune a former chair of the hospital board.

The gardens continued to be used for vegetable production with a full time gardener post created in 1953 in addition to the general handyman (who had previously also done the gardening). A new gardener's bungalow was completed in 1953.

General medicine increasingly dominated as specialist cases were taken to Raigmore Hospital. Surgical procedures ended in 1962, the operating theatre becoming the staff dining room. Specialist obstetrics had ceased by the early 1970s. From 1951 until the 1970s, it is listed with 25 beds and with 26 beds by the late 1980s, although it seems to have normally had spare capacity (table on next page).

Nairn Town & County	Beds occupied (averages) 1951-1972								
Year	51	54	56	58	60	62	63	68	72
Medical	7	7	6	7	9	11	12	16	15
Surgical	5	4	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	7	6	5	5	4	5	3	2
ENT (tonsils) & Dermatology	0	1	2	3	1	1	1	0	0
Average beds occupied	17	19	17	17	16	17	18	19	17

Source: Northern Region Health Board Minutes

In the early 1960s, births had been around 100 per annum but numbers had halved by the late 1960s and, in 1972, there were only 16 births.⁶¹ In 1985, the Health Board planned to re-designate seven maternity beds as geriatric but a campaign to retain maternity beds in Nairn forced a delay until the new maternity ward was opened at Raigmore in early 1988. In late 1988, the possibility of taking maternity cases from Moray again delayed a decision. In December 1990, the Board sought the Secretary of State's approval to close the maternity facility. He agreed in July 1991 and the maternity unit became day care for the elderly.⁶²

In 1992, a new day room costing £22,000 was formed with the Friends of Nairn Hospital raising £8,000. Two nurses ran in the London Marathon to raise money.⁶³

The hospital is now a GP managed community hospital for patients requiring medical care or who are recuperating.⁶⁴ In 2010, the hospital was virtually rebuilt (photo next page) and contained GP surgeries, social work, paediatrics, mental health, pharmacy and NHS dentistry making this one of the most advanced community health care facilities in Scotland.



Nairn Hospital 2014

The doctor most often associated with the 19th century Nairn Hospital is Dr Grigor who epitomises the Victorian medical man. Born in Elgin, he moved to Nairn early in his career and did much to advance Nairn as a Victorian health resort. Although not the prime mover, he was very influential in establishing the first Nairn Hospital. He is rightly commemorated by the people of Nairn in a statue outside one of its most elegant houses at Viewfield, now the home of Nairn Museum.⁶⁵



Matrons 1906 - 1974

1906-7	Miss Jessie Wood (transferred from old building). Resigns. ⁶⁶
1907-10	Miss Helen Bremner - sister in Dundee Infirmary. Leaves to get married. ⁶⁷
1910-15	Miss Ruby Meikle - depute matron of Chelsea Royal Hospital. Resigns to take up military nursing. ⁶⁸
1916-36	Miss Isabella V Fraser matron of Bignold Hospital, Wick. Left to get married. ⁶⁹
1936-49	Miss Ross. Resigns.
1949-59	Miss Alexandrina Mitchell.* Assistant matron at Woodend Aberdeen. Died 1976. ⁷⁰
1959-72	Miss Reid. Matron at Stephen Hospital, Dufftown. ⁷¹
1972-76	Miss Isobel O Mackay. Died 1977. ⁷²
1977	Miss Elsie Dawson.

*** The sister of the matron of Nairn Convalescent Home**

Medical Officers

1908	Present at AGM are Drs Sclanders, Wilson, Cruickshank and Sutter. ⁷³
1911	Dr Wilton Johns admitted as medical officer.
1913	Present at AGM are Drs Wilson, Cruickshank, Cameron, Macdonald and Johns. Dr Sutter appointed member of medical committee. Dr A Fraser Lee admitted as medical officer. Dr Sclanders had died.
1914	Dr Eric Wilson appointed in place of Dr Lee. 6 MOs pre-war. ⁷⁴
1918	There are 3 medical officers. ⁷⁵
1923	Dr Brodie Cruickshank (died 1925), Dr Douglas MacDonald, Dr George Wilson (died 1948 aged 80 and apparently still working), Dr Eric Wilson, Dr Johns. ⁷⁶
1932	Present at opening of maternity were Drs Eric Wilson, J Innes Watson, RK Hanlin and Douglas Macdonald. ⁷⁷
1936	Dr Innes Watson runs X-rays. ⁷⁸
1950	Miss Sarah P Fulton appointed full time Physiotherapist. Came from Dundee Orthopaedic and Rheumatic Clinic. ⁷⁹

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