Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Stockton and Thornaby Hospital

Tees Valley Museums

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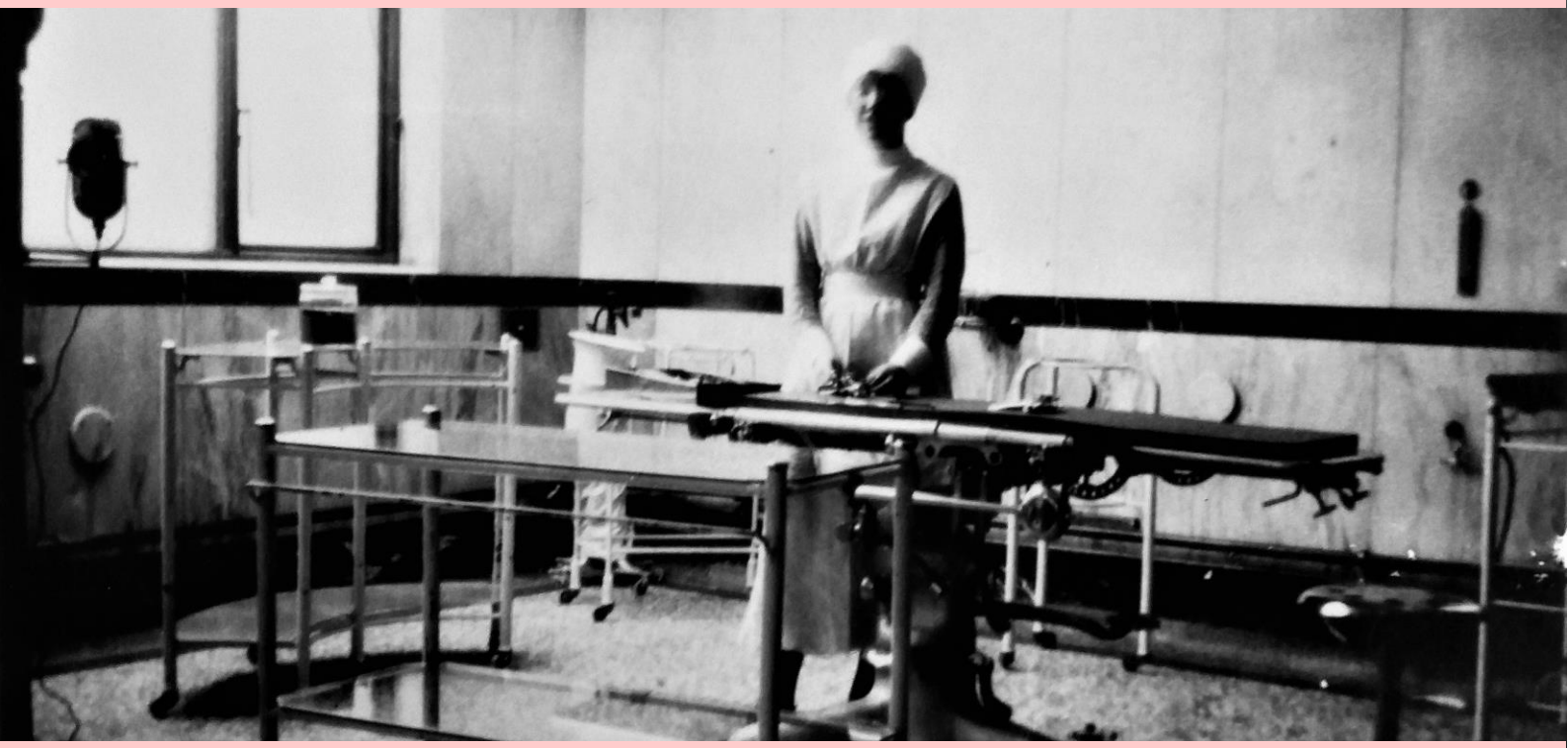
Tees Valley Museums

Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Each month we use objects and photos from our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

This month we are looking back at one of Stockton's first hospitals, from its humble beginnings to its years as an important service for the town. We will also look into the life of one of the Nurses who worked there.



All images used in this pack are courtesy of Preston Park Museum and Grounds.

You can find all our Talking Tees Valley packs through the Tees Valley Museums website under 'Latest News' or here: https://teesvalleymuseums.org/news/

If you would like to share your stories or contact us about the packs please e-mail teesvalleymuseums@stockton.gov.uk

Stockton Surgical Hospital

Stockton and Thornaby Hospital had a very humble beginning. It first opened as Stockton Surgical Hospital in 1862 in a small building on Thistle Green. It only had room for five beds!

As the population grew a bigger hospital was required. Over £9,000 was raised for the new building, which in today's money is over £560,000.

The foundation stone was laid on the 30th October 1875, and the new hospital officially opened a year later on Bowesfield Lane.

Fact File

Stockton Surgical Hospital had 58 patients in their first year alone – 47 were treated successfully, while 5 others left indefinitely, 4 died and 2 remained for further treatment.

The new hospital opened with 12 beds but by 1892 this had increased to 53 beds and 7 small cots with the opening of a children's wing.

In 1893 Stockton Surgical Hospital officially became Stockton and Thornaby Hospital.

"Liquid Refreshment" - Beer in Hospital?

Although it seems strange today, beer was thought to be safer to drink than water around this time. This was due to a lack of water sanitation in towns, and that the brewing process of beer killed off most bacteria that could be harmful.

Beer was also seen by some working in hospitals as nutritious and having health benefits. There are accounts from 1887 of Stockton and Thornaby Hospital purchasing a 9-gallon cask of beer for their patients – and this had been approved by the House Surgeon!

And there are earlier reports from 1877 of beer being given to medical staff with their meals, although this was stopped only three months later.

Stockton and Thornaby Hospital

In addition to the increased number of beds, Stockton and Thornaby Hospital had a resident House Surgeon and a team of Nurses led by a full-time Matron and a General Porter.

The new, bigger hospital didn't just serve the people of Stockton and Thornaby, its services extended to Yarm, Eaglescliffe, Norton, Billingham and many other townships.

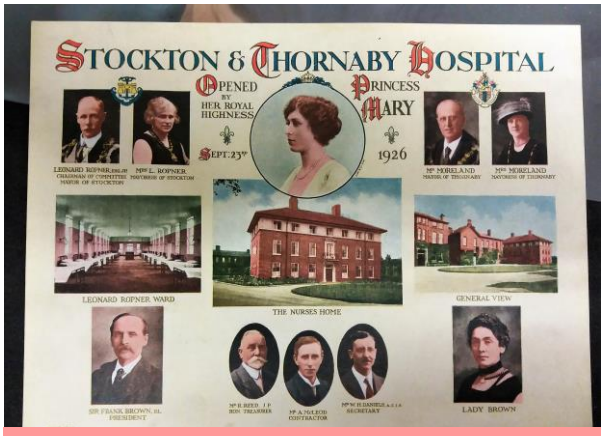
The hospital continued to grow, with the first extension happening just 5 years later in 1898 with a new operating theatre, wards for special cases, and more accommodation for nurses. Stockton Corporation, the governing authority of the town, usually provided the funds for most of the extensions, and so too did local figures, like Sir Robert Ropner in 1906.

Nurses salaries at the hospital were very low at this time. In 1906 they received only £22 a year, £1,728 in today's money. By 1917 some nurses' pay had increased to £38 (£2,241) a year, and they were allowed half a day each week off duty. Despite these concessions a nurse's work was still very demanding.

By 1926 the Hospital had received a large extension that deserved to be recognized through an official re-opening day on 23rd September. H.R.H Princess Mary opened the new extensions which included –

- 140 beds
- 2 new Surgical Wards
- 2 Children's Wards
- A Nurses' Home
- And an Outpatient Department

As part of the re-opening, Stockton and Thornaby Hospital was recognized by the General Nursing Council as a training school. Nurses undertook their training on-site for 3 years and were awarded 6 badges on completion of their training.



An official postcard commemorating the re-opening of Stockton and Thornaby Hospital on 23rd September 1926.

1948 saw the introduction of the National Health Service Act and Stockton and Thornaby Hospital became part of the Ministry of Health.

Before this, the Hospital had been run by a local committee, and residents had to pay a subscription to receive the hospital's services.

Isabel Mary Young

One of the many nurses who worked at Stockton and Thornaby Hospital was Isabel Mary Young, or Mary as she was known.

Mary had trained as a midwife in the late 1930s, but with the outbreak of World War 2 she was needed to treat injured service men at Leicester Royal Infirmary where she was based.

From 1945 to 1950 she worked at separate hospitals in Manchester and twice at Darlington Memorial Hospital. Then in 1950 she became a Relief Admin Sister at Stockton and Thornaby Hospital, and she stayed Hospital until its closure in 1968.

Although she was an efficient and compassionate Sister, she was also known to be formidable with some of the more troublesome patients on her wards.

Mary spent the last years of her working life at North Tees General Hospital until she retired in 1984 at 65 years old.

This was the uniform Mary wore while at Stockton and Thornaby Hospital.

Stockton and Thornaby Hospital had always needed extensions to care for the growing population of Teesside. By 1958 it became clear that a new purpose-built hospital was needed. Plans were drawn up for the new North Tees General Hospital which opened in 1968. Stockton and Thornaby Hospital closed soon after.

North Tees General Hospital

The new hospital was built on the Hardwick Estate of Stockton. It included all the necessary departments including outpatient and operating suites, and new maternity and psychiatry departments.

It also opened with a total of 978 beds, definitely an increase on Stockton Surgical's 5!

Do you or someone you know used to work at Stockton and Thornaby Hospital, or North Tees General? Or were you once treated there? Can you describe what it was like? Use the space here to jot down your thoughts.

Stockton and Thornaby Hospital Word Search

Can you find all the locations, jobs, and other interesting things about Stockton and Thornaby Hospital hidden in the word search?

A	A	D	T	H	S	T	O	C	K	T	O	N	D
T	H	E	E	A	T	T	O	D	H	S	R	R	O
A	O	T	B	H	M	H	W	S	L	B	A	R	I
T	S	S	D	C	I	O	R	D	E	W	M	T	E
T	P	T	U	U	D	R	L	M	A	R	Y	N	E
I	I	I	E	R	W	N	R	E	E	B	L	I	P
D	T	O	S	E	I	A	E	T	A	L	N	A	R
H	A	N	Y	P	F	B	E	P	B	A	T	W	S
T	L	D	U	T	E	Y	R	D	M	I	E	G	M
T	N	R	P	R	R	I	R	B	E	R	O	U	A
B	D	H	A	T	S	T	E	N	L	B	L	O	T
K	E	A	P	Y	T	E	T	D	T	R	R	T	R
O	R	D	A	E	S	U	R	G	E	O	N	I	O
T	N	T	T	T	H	E	A	T	R	E	I	T	N

Hospital
Bed
Patient
Stockton
Thornaby
Beer
Nurse
Matron
Surgeon
Theatre
Ward
Mary
Midwife