

**Irene Hunnam (Park) YHS 1952** wrote an article on [Yallourn Hospital in the late 50s](#)



Irene Park. M McIntosh. S Goldsmith – 1957



Yallourn Hospital Administration Foyer

In 1957 I started my Division 1 nursing training at the Yallourn Hospital. There were only two of us and we were shown to our rooms in the nursing home and issued with a grey uniform, stiffly starched cuffs and collars and a white cap. A purple cape with the hospital's insignia and a full white apron completed the uniform.

For the first 6 weeks, we were in a school block with Mr George Coulson as our tutor. At that time, Matron Baker was in charge of the wards and staff with Sr Crawford as the Deputy Matron. There was a dining room for staff where we all sat for meals and I always remember if you were seated and Matron walked in, you all stood with hands behind your backs till she was seated. Mr George Randle was Manager and Mr Scanlan, the accountant, was Assistant Manager. Dr Reader was the Medical Superintendent and he lived in a house on the hospital grounds.

There were two nursing block homes. In one lived the nursing aides but was also used in later years for some of the nursing trainees. The block I lived in was made up of single rooms with a lounge and small kitchen at one end and at the other, a laundry and toilet/shower. We all earned a very meagre wage and none of us could afford very much. We often borrowed one another's clothes to go out and we drank our tea and coffee out of jam jars. I can remember taking empty soft drink bottles back to retrieve the deposit from them for bus fare to the dance at Moe or Morwell. Our home supervisor was Miss Tillyer and we had to get a late pass from her if we wanted to go out. Mrs King ran the hospital kiosk and she allowed we girls to run up a tab, which we had to pay in full on our fortnightly pay day.

We formed a Student Nurses' Association and held small functions to raise money to buy record players for the nurses' homes. Back then, some of our wards were staffed with women who had migrated from the UK. They had worked in hospitals during World War 2. They held no certificates but held a wealth of knowledge and experience. They helped guide us through our training years and in some cases, became our second mothers at times, asking us out to their homes in Newborough for a meal.

For the next 3 years, I worked in every ward in the hospital – even the theatre. We all worked day and afternoon shifts and weekends. At times, it was very emotional as being a “Yallourn girl”, patients were people we grew up with and went to school with, but was not so bad when we saw them recover and go home. We sat exams at the end of our first and second year and when our final year was completed, we were sent to our study block for a time with our tutor, Matron Orr (who had replaced Matron Baker when she resigned). I always remember Sr Topsy Smith, who for many years was Charge Sister in Theatre, spending (in her own time) going over and over all the instruments that we may be asked at our exams. We travelled by train to Melbourne to sit our exams and stayed at the Victoria Palace and travelled each day to where the tests were held. I'm pleased to say I was successful. I look back on my 3 years at Yallourn Hospital with fond memories. There was a lot of hard work, long hours, but also a lot of fun times which went on to form wonderful friendships – some of which I still have today. I moved to Melbourne in my 20s with my husband and 2 children and I continued to work as a nurse for the next 40 years and was always proud and grateful for the years I spent at Yallourn Hospital