



Diggings



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MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL: THE EARLY YEARS



Maryborough Hospital circa 1870s
Early photograph of a watercolour by William Tibbits



Hospital Staff circa early 20th Century
Both images: Maryborough Midlands Historical Society

Maryborough's new hospital opened in 2025. Our last *Diggings* issue outlined the roles played by some of the hospital staff - both nurses and doctors in World War One.

One early 20th Century tradition (organised by many country hospitals) was the "Wood Bee". The hospital's wood-fired boilers consumed enormous amounts of fuel, which had to be cut to size. Cutting and transporting the wood in the horse and dray and pre-chain saw era required an enormous community operation.

MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL SUCCESSFUL WOOD BEE

On Wednesday the annual wood bee in connection with the Maryborough District Hospital took place, and proved the most successful that has been held for many years as the result of a laudable co-operation on behalf of the cutters and carters; nearly 150 tons of wood were added to the diminished supplies of the institution. The committee look upon this as a splendid response to their call for assistance and expressed the warmest thanks to all who took part in the wonderful effort. This year the block made available by the local forest officer (Mr Watson) was situated at the rear of Royal Park [adjacent to the present Golf Course] and though the cutters were not as numerous as in former years, they made up the deficiency in numbers by energetic activity. They had been hard at work during the past month and the workers included the male members of the hospital staff, not the least enthusiastic helper being the secretary of the institution (Mr C. Lean).

After the carting and stacking had been completed they were treated to refreshments by Matron Hemley and staff. The president of the hospital, (Mr J. R. Green, J.P.), speaking on behalf of the committee and subscribers, thanked all who had so willingly and generously assisted to make the wood bee such a wonderful success. The committee were thankful to those who brought the smallest load, and their donation was even greater than that of those who donated £1 and let their help rest at that. It was fine to realise that there was a body of men ready to go into the forest with horses and drays and work so hard both in carting and stacking the wood for so worthy an object as the institution. He hoped the occasion would never arise, but assured them that if ever they took ill or met with any accident they would always find the best of attention awaiting them at the hospital. In conclusion, he expressed his thanks to the matron and staff for entertaining them so liberally.

Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser, Friday 4 October 1918

The article concludes with a detailed list of participants, their vehicles and animals, and the number of loads carried. It's perhaps a sign of the changing times that one traction engine took part.

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A VISITOR'S VIEW IN 1914

MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL

During his visit to Maryborough in connection with the Farmers,' Conference, Mr G. W. Anderson took advantage of the opportunity' to visit the local hospital. He found it to be a very fine institution, built in 1854, and considerably added to since. As a committeeman of the Warragul District Hospital, he was very cordially received by the Matron- and the medical officers present.

The outlay on the different buildings, was of course, considerably in excess of the Warragul institution. The fine operating theatre cost £900, and one whole side was comprised of plate glass. The steam laundry' cost £1,700, and all the cooking is done by steam. Steam is also being utilised to heat the wards. There. are 42 beds and the daily average is about 35. The Matron has ten nurses to help her. There are also two wards set apart for old people, each ward accommodating eight beds.

Maryborough, of course, is a large centre, and the hospital is old enough to be subsidised by wealthy people, so much so that we understand it has funds out at interest. We have not yet reached that stage in Warragul, but we may when the institution, like Maryborough, has been in existence over half a century. Mr Anderson was much impressed with the smart and polished appearance of the whole interior, indicating good management, assisted doubtless by a fairly generous revenue.

West Gippsland Gazette (Warragul, Vic. : 1898 - 1930), Tuesday 14 July 1914.



SUPPLIES AND A FUNDING DILEMMA in 1857

MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL

The Committee of Management of the Maryborough Hospital met on Tuesday evening at the Mclvor Hotel, for the purpose of considering the tenders for supplies, for the use of the above Institution. There were present, Messrs, Laidman, Henriques, Fowler, [?], Dicker, and Anderson. Mr Roberts, Vice President, in the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, the chairman proceeded to the special business of the evening, when the following tenders were accepted-Thomas Bird, water, 5s. per cask of 60 gallons Mathew Allen, eggs, 4s. per dozen. Mathew Adamson, firewood, at 9s per ton of 40 cubic feet, Lunn Brothers, meat, 7d. per pound, Andrews and Logan, bread, 9s. per dozen of 14 loaves, milk, 6d per quart. Solomon and Levy, butter D.H. Cork 4½d. per pound; Hamburg butter 1s. 8d per pound; cheese, salt per bag of 200 pounds 38s.; pepper per tin of 14 pounds at 1s, 3d. per pound; sugar 56s, per cwt.; tea per chest £9 ; coffee 1s. 3. per pound; rice 30s. per c.; sago 9d. per pound; arrowroot 1s. 3d. per pound ; candles Belmont Sperm, 1s.5d. per pound; soap 54s. per cwt.; port wine per case 45s.; sherry 42s.; brandy at per case 65s.; Byas's [sic] porter 18s per dozen. Thomas Casey interments, at £5. Some of the tenders are far below the original ones in prices. I have to congratulate the members of the committee, therefore, In having effected a considerable saving to the funds of the Hospital. The present committee work with great unanimity and good feeling in endeavouring to promote the increased prosperity of this most excellent Institution.

The call made upon their fellow townsmen for subscriptions to enable them to claim the Government grant of £500 to the building fund. was, as far as storekeepers were concerned, most liberally responded to. We cannot however help adverting to the remarkable apathy shown by the diggers themselves, and the great want of liberality displayed by them in particular, in this matter. The Hospital is par excellence a diggers Hospital, nine-tenths of the patients admitted within its walls are diggers, nevertheless it is of rare occurrence indeed that an appeal to the benevolence of miners on behalf of this Institution is met by arguments from the mint. They manage these things better on Ballarat. There, whenever a division of spoil takes place amongst the fortunate holders of a rich claim, their few fortunate brethren are not quite lost sight of; a share of the good fortune is almost universally given to the Hospital. This is a most commendable practice and one that we should like much to see, if only occasionally, followed in this district. The committee are about erecting a permanent brick building, and we desire to impress upon the diggers the application of the proverb "" many a muckle makes a muckle," and them remember also " he gives double who gives quickly'." The purse of the Hospital Building Fund will bear an amount of gold and notes that the diggers like to contribute; we can assure them there is not the least room for alarm upon that score. Not the slightest difficulty, beyond the want of funds, can prevent the sphere of its usefulness from being enlarged. Within this last week the House Surgeon was obliged to have a bed made upon the floor, to accommodate a patient, until there was a vacancy. Do not let it be said that the diggers around Maryborough display less benevolence than those of the same class in other places.

Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser (Vic. : 1857 - 1867 ; 1914 - 1918), Friday 18 September 1857, page 2

MARTA CLARA TOBLER: a notable Maryborough citizen and industrial pioneer *"She never walked if she could run"*



Formerly, the economy of Maryborough, like many towns in the western part of Victoria, was largely dependent on the gold mining industry. When the gold boom ended, the town suffered. The start of manufacturing industry in the town increased employment and gave the residents security. Major industry came to Maryborough in 1923 when the Maryborough Knitting Mills Pty Ltd opened. Principal investors were George Cuttle and his Swiss-born buyer **Marta Tobler**. Together they had sold imported Swiss Lace along the East coast of Australia. Cuttle had previously run a smaller knitting mill in Clunes.

The mill was instrumental in bringing electricity to parts of the town. During the 1930's depression, the mill soldiered on and during World War II it supplied uniforms to the Commonwealth Government. After the war there was a decline in sales that required the mill to raise additional capital in order to survive.

Marta Tobler became an associate director of the company and was one of the few women involved in running industrial businesses in post war Australia. The mill finally closed in 1990.

Stanley Macarthur Fergusson:

The History of Textile Manufacture in Australia 1788 - 2020 (Ph.D thesis)

MARTA TOBLER (1886- 1978): her story

Born in Altstätten, Switzerland, historically an important centre for the Swiss textile industry, in particular lace, and embroidery, Marta Tobler began her business career with the lace making firm Eugster & Co. The company dealt with buyers from around the world, one of which was Australian George Cuttle. In 1914 she migrated alone to Australia, already a well travelled woman and proficient in German, English and French.

Initially she distributed Swiss embroidery, but the outbreak of WW1 severely affected that trade, and in association with George Cuttle she set up a factory in Clunes in 1917, pioneering the local production of knitted underwear. She and the Cuttles visited the U.S. to research and import machinery. Until this time most of Australia's "white wear" was imported.

Although her time in Clunes was happy and productive, it was tinged with personal sadness. Marta's father and two siblings had already died so she planned for her mother to join her in Australia. En route by sea on *RMS China* Josephine Tobler was fatally injured on deck by a piece of moving cargo and was buried at sea.

In 1923 Marta Tobler became a naturalised Australian. In the same year she moved to Maryborough when George Cuttle was persuaded by the Maryborough Progress Association to move his plant and some of his employees, establishing Maryborough Knitting Mills (Cuttle) Limited (known locally as MKM). Cuttle was its first Chairman and Managing Director and Marta Tobler the Chief Clerk. She carried out this role until her retirement in 1954. She was instrumental in the development of the company through difficulties such as the unexpected death of George Cuttle and the beginning of the Great Depression. When new Director Donald McKenzie was appointed Commonwealth Controller of Knitted Goods from 1940-1942 she took on even more responsibility. After WW2 she was appointed an Associated Director of the Company.

Renowned for her energy, attention to detail and work ethic, Marta Tobler trained dozens of young workers at MKM. During World War Two she volunteered as an Air Observer, operating from the post at the foot of Bristol Hill. In the 1950s she was a founder member of the Maryborough Business and Professional Women's Club. In retirement she was able to devote more time to her hobbies, which included golf, croquet, travel and theatre. She was also actively involved in the local community - Red Cross, the Benevolent Society, Save the Children fund, the Congregational Ladies Guild and the Elderly Citizens' Club. Local resident Eileen Courtney recalls Marta's energy and considerable contributions to cake stalls.

In August 1955 the celebrated author Alan Marshall visited Maryborough to gather information for his column "My People" in *The Argus*. He was shown around by Glen Moorhead and Lyle Courtney, and met Marta Tobler.

*Miss Marta Tobler comes from Switzerland, but she has been living in Australia for so many years that she is now as Australian as a wattle tree. She works at Maryborough Knitting Mills and when talking to her the other day, I asked her what had been her most vivid impression of this country when she arrived here. "The sunshine and the geraniums," she said. In her country it appears geraniums are grown with difficulty and have an added value because of this. In Australia she saw them growing in profusion. **The Argus, Friday August 26, 1955***

Based on information in Betty Osborn's "Against The Odds: Maryborough 1905-1961" and an uncredited obituary published in the Maryborough Advertiser in 1978



WASH HOUSE SCRUBBED UP

Our Society is grateful to Central Goldfields Shire Council (which owns the property) for the recent upgrade to our 70 year old wash house, that was beginning to show its age.

In the days of the original owners, the Worsley family, and until the 1950s, washing was done in a shed at the rear of the property. The owner in the 1950s carried out improvements such as the construction of this wash house, which was fitted with a wood burning copper and cement tubs connected to the town water supply.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: INVITATION

The Annual General Meeting of the
Maryborough Midlands Historical Society
will be held on:

Wednesday March 18 at 2pm
Research & Resource Centre
3 Palmerston Street
Maryborough
All welcome

Following the meeting, you are invited to inspect the refurbished Worsley Cottage, wash house and garden.

MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL: DR DEANE MEMORIAL GATES



Our members were delighted to see that the Dr Deane Memorial Gates have been refurbished and reinstalled on a Clarendon Street entrance to the new hospital. The gates were originally installed in front of the 1861 building (which can be seen top right). Over the years the smaller pedestrian gate (originally to the left of the double gates) seems to have gone missing. We'd be interested to hear from any long-time local residents who might be able to cast some light on its fate.

