



A brief background to the Alfred Hospital Nurses League - Nursing Archive.

The Alfred Hospital, opened in 1871, is one of the oldest Melbourne hospitals and, unlike many others, still operating on its original site. The Alfred Hospital Nurses League [AHNL], founded in 1918, funds the Nursing Archive which is the only independent, incorporated archive of nursing related documents and artefacts in metropolitan Melbourne.

The Nursing Archive not only assesses, acquires, collates, catalogues, restores and researches, it offers research results and references to a range of enquirers. It also offers nurse reunion tours of the hospital to enhance camaraderie and encourage League membership which financially supports the Nursing Archive.

The Nursing Archive was developed through the compilation of reminiscences by Ruth Henderson [Neil] Graduate 1938. Inspired by this, the League set up a working party to gather memorabilia which was displayed at a League 'Memorabilia Night' in October 1989. By June 1990 an archival collection sub-committee was established; Margaret Royston [Miller] Graduate 1949, began collecting items and was allocated a small box room in the Main Nurses Home on Punt Road. Margaret worked alone for two years before being assisted by Audrey Doig [Krautil] Graduate 1950, Deirdre Farrell [Campbell] Graduate 1950, Norma Hodge [Whitlock] Graduate 1953, and Von Clinch, Graduate 1950. Margaret retired in 2010. Maree Dillon was then appointed Manager. Maree was an Alfred Hospital employee from 1982 until 2012 and has been a Nursing Archive volunteer since 2003. Supported by the League, she undertook training in museum /archive techniques and methods.

The collection is extensive, including the complete nurse administrative, education and post graduate course records; biographical material of many nurse graduates; recorded oral histories, transcripts and all the minutes of the AHNL Committee meetings since the League's first meeting in 1918. Also included are diaries, uniforms, medals, banners, furniture and medical equipment.

In 2012 the collection was awarded a significance assessment by the National Library of Australia. It was deemed to have local, state and national historical significance, especially as it represents the first formal nurse training school in Victoria, which commenced December 1, 1880.

The upheaval caused by COVID – 19 has suspended League operations and closed the Archive until further notice. The Archive space was previously located in the old Monash Medical School building behind the ambulance bays and adjoining the Alfred Hospital. That space has now been repurposed to accommodate increasing hospital demands. Over 12,000 Archive items are currently in storage on the hospital site.

The League looks forward to a brighter future post COVID – 19.