

WAIKARI HOSPITAL.

1915.

A factor that helped to create a feeling in favour of a hospital at Waikari was that the Counties of Cheviot, Amuri and Waipara considered that they were getting a poor return for the hospital rates they were paying. A proposal that the three Counties should get severance from the North Canterbury Hospital Board district and build a hospital at Waikari to serve their district was taken up with considerable favour and sympathetically received by the Minister of Hospitals. However, when it was known that the Hospital Board was prepared to assist in establishing a small hospital in North Canterbury, that proposal was not proceeded with.

A meeting was held at the Great Northern Hotel on the occasion of Dr. Little's return to Waikari after an absence of twenty-three years at Amuri. They all knew what a strenuous life he had lived, and hoped that in the very near future, by the erection of a hospital, he would get some relief and assistance which would save him a lot of travelling and allow him to have leisure to which he was certainly entitled. There was a private hospital in existence at Hawarden in 1915, which was offered to the Government as accommodation for wounded soldiers, but this had nothing to do with the project the County Council had in mind. The Board could not entertain the idea of establishing a Cottage Hospital at this time, but if offered a grant of £75 to the Doctors' Fund, provided the doctor accepted the Board's terms relating to the attendance on such destitute persons in the district as the Board might require him to visit.

1918.

In 1918 the Board submitted a plan - one which had been drawn for a similar hospital in another district. The Council called a meeting of ratepayers and they were strongly in favour of accepting the Board's assistance regarding a Country Hospital and Maternity Home in the County.

A letter from the Minister indicated that it was possible that a subsidy would not be recognised by the Audit Department. The County proposed to raise their proportion of funds for the purpose of erecting a Hospital by a special rate. There was difficulty in obtaining a subsidy from the Government on money contributed in this way as it was neither a voluntary contribution nor a levy. Consequently a special rate was struck in 1918 and the Government was prepared to pay a subsidy on such special rate equal to 15/- in the £.

In May, 1918, four sites were inspected by the Chairman, the Architect and the District Health Officer. Three of these were in Waikari and the fourth was the Horsley Downs homestead built in brick, with 100 acres of land, situated 8 miles from the township. The site chosen was an ideal one near the Railway Station with a northerly aspect, and on a gentle slope with shelter trees on the east. On the adjoining property (Education Department Reserve), water was obtainable from a spring. It was decided to purchase this site comprising 2 acres, 1 rood, 22 perches, of the Townend Estate, and a transfer was prepared in September. The County Council made arrangements for the road running through the section to be closed and undertook to take necessary steps to divert it in the direction as agreed upon by the visiting Committee of the North Canterbury Hospital Board.

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The Architects, Collins and Harman drew the Board's attention to the advance in price of some materials since an estimate was given and pointed out that excavations for buildings and drains were proving to be costly. Tenders were received and J. Taylor's was accepted, but owing to the tender being in excess of the estimate, the matter was referred to the Minister whose final approval was not received till April, 1919. The estimated cost was £4,500 and the tender £5,724 with extras amounting to £796. Feeling against the establishment of a hospital was very pronounced in the Waipara district. Petitions for and against proceeding with its establishment were presented to the Waipara County Council. A meeting of ratepayers was called and passed a resolution supporting the proposal. After that, a move to circulate another petition in opposition was made. In June, 1919, as a counter move, a public Arbour Day was held and shelter belts were planted on the site, a goodly number of those in opposition taking part. The ladies of the district provided afternoon tea, and the battle which had taken place for and against the proposal ended pleasantly. It so happened that one of the strong oppositionists was among the first to be admitted as an accident case.

The Board owed a debt of gratitude to the County Council and especially to Mr. R. Evans, the Board's representative for the district, for the assistance that had been given throughout. A silver cup was presented on the occasion of the birth of the first child. This practice has been in vogue since the Maternity Hospitals, under the control of the Hospital Board, came into being. For a considerable time birth announcements were advertised in the Christchurch daily papers with the idea of popularising the Hospital and Maternity Institutions.

1920.

The doors of the Hospital were opened by Mrs. Evans on 2nd September, 1920. To give the institution the greatest usefulness, it was a Cottage Hospital and Maternity Home combined. Persons unable to pay the ordinary medical and nursing charges outside could obtain accommodation with all the advantage of an up-to-date Institution. Free treatment was given if the circumstances were such that patients were unable to afford payment.

The Waipara County objected to pay such amount as, with subsidy, would provide two-thirds of the cost of construction of the Waikari Hospital. The contention was that they only stipulated to pay one-third of the cost, but there was no justification for this, as it was obvious that the Government had already contributed directly to the County Fund. The Minister stated that if the money came out of rates, the Government could only give 15/-, for it was already contributing 5/- subsidy on the amount raised from the ratepayers of the County.

1922.

In 1922 disappointment was expressed by the Board that the Hospital had not been made more use of, so that to give it the fullest possible use, cases were sent from Christchurch Hospital until such time as the rooms were required for local cases.

1923.

In December, 1923, the Board's Finance Committee and local representatives with the Doctor met at Waikari to inspect the hospital with regard to possible extensions including a balcony in the main ward at the east end, the

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screening off the front entrance for emergency accommodation, and the erection of a three or four-bed ward for males at the west end of the building. The Board decided that extensions should be made later and the cost to be included in the estimates for the following year.

1925.

It was not until 1925 that formal application was made to the Minister for much needed extensions at a cost of £900. This was not met with favourably, but fresh plans estimated to cost £600 were approved.

1926.

In 1926 application was made for the Waikari Hospital to be registered as a "Training school for midwives or maternity nurses" under the 1925 Act. The Nurses and Midwives Registration Board notified that the Waikari Hospital was approved as a training school for maternity nurses only, and that the maximum number of nurses to be trained in a period of twelve months was three. In the event of this number being exceeded, the recognition as a training school would be cancelled. The minimum age for nurses to obtain registration was fixed at twenty years.

In a report from the Department of Health in 1934, on the small hospitals under the Board's jurisdiction, it was suggested that either the Amuri or the Waikari Hospital should be closed, as they both admitted general and maternity cases and the distance apart was comparatively small with very good road connection. A large proportion of the patients attending Waikari Hospital were from two areas, Seagill-Motenui-Omihiri district and the Hawarden-Mason's Flat division. The local Plunket Society and the Waipara County Council strongly protested to the Board against any attempt by the Department to close the hospital. A protest was also forwarded to the Minister of Health by the Council.

Nothing untoward has taken place in connection with the smooth running of this institution which compares very favourably with any of the country hospitals.



Waikari Hospital.

CHARLES THOMAS WILSON LITTLE, M.D.1866 - 1918.

A statue was erected by his friends to commemorate a life of devotion and self-sacrifice.

Dr. Little was the first doctor to attend to the requirements of the hospital. He strongly supported the proposal to build a hospital at Waikari, but did not live to see that work completed, having fallen a victim to the epidemic of 1918 in trying to assist and relieve those suffering from that malady.

He and Mrs. Little had to vacate their residence at Hawarden and were obliged to reside at the Great Northern Hotel at Waikari. Four residents of Waikari, namely, H. M. Anderson, W. Earl, C. Arves and H. H. Holland, undertook the building of a doctor's residence and the Waipara County Council agreed to take it over after obtaining the necessary power to do so. This was the beginning of County Councils providing doctor's houses in country districts. The Waikari doctor's house was designed in consultation with Dr. Little, but he died before it was completed.

A fund was inaugurated to collect subscriptions for the purpose of erecting a memorial to the late Doctor. The residents of the Waipara County, being whole-heartedly in favour of erecting a statue, petitioned the Board to allow such a monument to the late Doctor's philanthropic work to be placed in close proximity to the Waikari Hospital. A suitable and imposing position was chosen on the gradual rise in front of the hospital.



Monument to late Dr. Little.