

Memories of working at Standish Hospital

In September 1974 I arrived at Standish Hospital as a student nurse to complete my orthopaedic training. The advantage of this was that I was able to commence my nursing career at the age of 17 years. Completion of this course entitled me to have a reduced time studying for my general training.

We were employed by Gloucestershire Health Authority, spending most of our time at Standish with some secondment at Gloucester Royal Hospital. Mr Smith was our academic tutor with lessons conducted in the school room which was situated in the old white house. Miss Small was our sister tutor, visiting us on the wards to teach and advise us on the practical aspects of nursing.

It was a happy place, surrounded by like-minded people. We worked hard, both in the classroom and on the wards. Shifts began at 7.30 am until 4.00 pm, with 'split shifts' i.e. a morning shift, a break for lunch and resuming late afternoon to cover the wards in the evening shift. We were always expected to dress smartly and be on time to report to the Ward Sister.

At the entrance to C Block there was a small shop selling confectionery, stamps, toiletries etc, anything a patient might need – although anyone could purchase items. Beside this was a clocking-in machine; cards had to be stamped at the beginning and end of each shift. During the summer months the swimming pool and tennis courts were in use.

There were two homes for nursing students to live in. I lived in the old Standish House in a large room on the top floor. We had shared bathrooms with plenty of hot, running water – a new concept to me! Then there was North House, which was a large red brick building behind Standish House. It had the nurses' common room on the ground floor, and also the sewing room where ladies were employed to do mending and alterations.

Parties were sometimes held in the nurses' home common room. There was no alcohol allowed, it was all over by 12 midnight and the Night Sister kept an eye on things, but it was fun.

We were rather isolated, with limited public transport available. Periodically a group of us would travel by train to London, returning on the mail train. Walking home through Stonehouse in the early hours of the morning, we were always questioned by the Stonehouse police and then given a lift home. Of course, subsequently the police were invited to our next party and would call in for 'a cup of tea' when passing!

After completing my time at Standish I did further training in Bath. Moving back to the Stroud area in 1988, I obtained a job as Staff Nurse on Ward C2, staying there for eight years.