

THE NOBLE FLORENCE CHATFIELD OBE

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Figure 1. Matron Florence Chatfield circa 1934
Diamantina Healthcare Museum

When I began the research on Matron Florence Chatfield OBE in 2000, I found some interesting and admirable aspects of her life which reflected upon her contribution to the nursing profession. Among the articles found during my research were two photo albums with photographs of the early nursing staff at Diamantina Hospital. I also discovered a Grandfather clock in a Brisbane Antique Clock shop which was presented to Florence by the Diamantina Hospital Nurses on her retirement on 24th June 1934.

The clock was purchased by the Past Nurses Association of Princess Alexandra Hospital for the Diamantina Healthcare Museum.

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Service with distinction 1889-1934

- This remarkable woman made a significant contribution to the nursing profession and the Queensland community. Her sound judgment and excellence as an administrator were complimented by her loving nature and cheerful disposition.
- In 1932 she was awarded an OBE for a life time of service. In 1935 she was awarded a Jubilee medal and in 1937, a Coronation medal.

Migration to Queensland 1885

- Florence was born at Worthing, Sussex England on 1st February 1867. She received her education in London.
- On 7th April 1885 Florence, aged 17 and her family sailed from London on board the 2000 tonnes vessel Chyebassa.
- They arrived in Brisbane on 3rd June 1885.
- Shipping records indicated the family were free settlers.

1885

6 5 2

				Free	
✓	Bushman	Robert	27	1	From Lark
✓	Cookwell	Mary	19	1	From Lark
✓	Chatfield	Emily	20	1	do.
✓		Florence	17	1	do.
✓	Codid	Charbella	25	1	do.
✓	Day	Mary	19	1	do.

Figure 2. Immigration records 1885

Old State Library

Nursing training 1889

- **Initially Florence worked as a domestic servant.**
- **In March 1889 she commenced three years nursing training at the Brisbane Hospital.**
- **After receiving her certificate in 1892 she was appointed a Charge Nurse.**
- **In 1896 she was appointed Deputy Matron of the Brisbane Hospital.**



**Figure 3. Florence, in front of Lady Lamington Nurses Home late 1890's.
*Photo from Florence Chatfield's Album***

Diamantina Hospital 1900

- In 1897, the Government Architect suggested the collection of buildings known as Diamantina Orphanage be converted into Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases.
- In November 1900 Florence was appointed Acting Lady Superintendent.
- The hospital was officially opened on 5th August 1901 with 72 beds.



Figure 4. Florence Chatfield and Diamantina Nurses early 1900's.
Florence Chatfield's Album

Matron Diamantina Hospital 1904

- **In November 1904 Florence was appointed Matron.**
- **She quickly became busy organising the running of the hospital, training of nurses and welfare of patients.**
- **She was also actively involved with Australian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA) Federal Branch and, was a council member for forty years.**



Figure 5. Florence Chatfield and Diamantina Nurses circa 1904.
Florence Chatfield's Album

Australasian Trained Nurses Association Qld Branch (ATNA) 1904

- In 1904, Miss Chatfield called a meeting to form the Qld branch.
- The ATNA (now known as the Royal Australian Nursing Federation) set guidelines for the training and examinations of nurses in Qld. On completion of training nurses had to apply to the Council for registration.

Inaugural Qld Nurses Registration Board 1912

- In 1912 the ATNA-State Registration under the Health Act Amendment Bill-Nurses Section 1911 was established.
- The board consisted of the Inspector General Hospitals for the Insane, two medical practitioners, Florence Chatfield and another ATNA member.

Diamantina Training School 1913

- **In 1860, Florence Nightingale established her training school for nurses at Saint Thomas' Hospital London. A pre-requisite for entry into the course required applicants to possess a good moral character, obey strict rules, and be prepared to dedicate themselves to the duty and service of patients under their care.**
- **Following the Nightingale tradition, Florence requested the hospital establish a training school for nurses.**
- **In June 1913, twenty four nurses commenced a three year training course.**
- **Nineteen nurses completed their training during 1916-1917.**



Figure 6. Diamantina Hospital circa 1913
Diamantina Healthcare Museum

First Diamantina Hospital nurses

- Queensland Parliamentary Papers Vol 11 1916-1917 lists the names of the first nurses to graduate from the hospital.
- They were S McKinnon, N Roberts, A Yapp, J Gordon, E Albert, A Dwyer, J Waters, R Robinson, D Short, E Fitzgerald, T Maxwell, A Small, I Ramsay, E Cunningham, J Abel, D Cardew, C Axelson, M Dodswell.



Figure 7. Registration certificate of Susie McKinnon one of the first Diamantina nurses. *Diamantina Healthcare Museum Dr Ron Woods.*

Supervisor & Organiser Qld Baby Clinics 1918-1922

- Prior to 1918 Florence travelled to New Zealand to meet with Dr Truby King.
- A paediatrician, Dr Jeffries Turner assisted with setting up the Clinics.
- On 18th March 1918 the first Clinic was opened in a small rented cottage in Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley. Miss E Barron was placed in charge.
- At this time Florence was also on the Committee of the Children's Hospital Willowburn, the Epileptic Home and Westwood Sanatorium.



Figure 8. Florence with Health Centre babies circa 1918.
Florence Chatfield's Album

Nurses Rest Home 1925

- In 1925, Florence requested the ATNA establish a home for nurses who, through age or disability could no longer practice their profession.
- The Brisbane Courier opened a fund and subscription cards sent out. Florence and Miss E Barron were appointed Trustees.
- A two storey home was purchased in Mallon Street Bowen Hills and was still in operating 1936.



Figure 9. Florence Chatfield and staff late 1920's.
Diamantina Healthcare Museum

Order of the British Empire OBE 1932

- **Diamantina Hospital staff nominated Florence for the award - “for a life time of service to the sick and suffering humanity”.**
- **The Committee of Diamantina Patients Welfare Association recognized her efficient administration, sterling qualities of character and influence of her loving nature upon the lives of those under her under care. At this time the Committee presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation which can be seen in the Princess Alexandra Hospital Library.**

Retirement 28th June 1934

- **A Musical and elocutionary concert was held.**
- **At another farewell Mr Chuter from Home Secretary’s Dept presented Florence with a wallet of notes on behalf of the professional staff.**

Grandfather Clock

On behalf of all past nurses Mr F Staubwasser presented Florence with a German Grandfather clock.

NB The clock was found in a Brisbane Antique Clock shop in November 2000. The Past Nurses Association of Princess Alexandra Hospital purchased the clock for the Diamantina Healthcare Museum.



Figure 10. German grandfather English Oak clock presented to Florence on her retirement from the past nurses of the Diamantina Hospital 28.6.1934.

Tribute

- Florence Chatfield passed away in Brisbane 5th November 1949.
- An entry in the Australian Nurses Journal Feb 1932 described how Florence was beloved by hundreds of women to whom at one time she acted as guide, philosopher and friend.

QNC Florence Chatfield Research Grant 1996

- Queensland Nursing Council established a \$50,000 Grant to be used for research that had a significant impact on nursing in the development of knowledge and provision of safe and competent care.
- Recipients:
 - 1999 Joan Webster
 - 2000 Patsy Yates
 - 2001 Desley Hegney - in honour of “the perfect woman, nobly planned”

PRIMARY SOURCES:

1. Nursing Forum Vol. 7 Issue 1 1999.
2. Australian Nursing Journal June 1950.
3. Immigration Records Queensland State Library.
4. Courier Mail 7th Nov. 1949.
5. Annual Report Australian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA) 1904.
6. Australian Nurses Journal 15th Dec.1904.
7. Minutes of Special Meeting Australian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA) 11th Aug. 1911.
8. Interview with Miss Bartz Schultz Nurse Educator.
9. Queensland Parliamentary Papers (QPP) Vol. 11 1916-17.
10. Australian Nurses Journal 15th February 1932.
11. Australian Nurses Journal 16th July 1934.
12. Queensland Nursing Council (QNC) E. Newsletter May 2001.
13. Interview with Mrs Jan Park.