

## Our Other Next Door Neighbour

At 3 pm on Saturday, 23 July 1898 the new Victoria Cottage Hospital in North Street, erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, celebrated the previous year, was opened by Sir Samuel Wilkes, bart., President of the Royal College of Physicians and Physician Extraordinary to the Queen before an invited audience of some 400 guests. It replaced the town's former hospital in King Street, which had been open for some ten years, treating 330 patients. A large marquee had been erected in the new hospital's grounds for the event on that sunny summer's afternoon. The hospital was, and still is, our immediate next door neighbour, built on the site of what was then a disused orchard, owned formerly by the late Dr. Thomas Palmer Stephens. At the opening ceremony a letter was read out which had been received from the Queen's Secretary, Sir Arthur Biggs, congratulating Emsworth residents on their very successful fund raising:

... I am authorised to assure you Her Majesty has learnt with much satisfaction of the liberal and charitable manner in which the people of Emsworth, generously assisted by others, have commemorated her Diamond Jubilee by building a village hospital. While thus showing their loyalty to the Queen, they have nobly contributed to a work of mercy with which Her Majesty heartily sympathises.

Before the opening townspeople had purchased the land for £149. 6s 9d, and contributed towards the cost of building, which amounted to £1,344. 3s. 4d, including the architect's and other fees. Of this £878. 11s. 8d. had been raised by public subscription, of which £9. 14s. 6d. came from sums of less than 1s. The football team had played two matches, a cycle carnival had been arranged and the Friendly Society's Demonstration and procession raised another £21. 16s. 0d., so it truly represented the whole town's efforts. The foundation stone had been laid only eleven months before on Friday, 7 August 1897 by Mrs Ernard Smith, a great supporter and benefactress of the hospital.

For its time it was considered to be most progressive with an operating theatre, emergency wards, one for three men and another for three women, a boardroom, matron's apartments, servants' rooms and offices, designed by Mr. Birch (London), the architect. The builder was Mr. W. Poate, who, according to the newspaper report, 'had built the hospital without profit to himself', and who proudly declared 'the hospital is built upon six tons of good solid concrete and there is not a bad brick nor a faulty piece of timber in the whole building'.

Just one year later, in 1899, Alfred Stent of Havant, a member of the Rontgen Society, offered the hospital the use of his x-ray machine, and was appointed radiographer. The hospital was not thought to contain its own dispensary, for according to an original prescription book of 1899 (now in the museum) from the original building and shop of The Old Pharmacy (est. 1851) in High Street, it was the chemist there who dispensed

requirements and prescriptions on the hospital's behalf. Rules for the new hospital followed very much on the lines already laid down for the town's first hospital in King Street, setting out who were and were not eligible for admission, costs, and visiting times (see Tony Yoward's information sheet on both Emsworth hospitals in the museum). Cooking and laundry duties were originally carried out by volunteers and patients' relatives.

The Cottage Hospital has now been serving Emsworth's townspeople for well over one hundred years and continues to be a well used facility which is valued tremendously.

Together with the former Town Hall, now the Museum and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Station, and the purpose-built Post Office erected in 1902-3, these three buildings made up the Victorian and early Edwardian centre of the town and are an important daily reminder of the public spirit of Emsworth's energetic, generous and thriving population.

*Margaret Rogers*