

Font of history

CSU Regional Archives Saturday Openings
The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. On these days the Archives will be open from 10am to 3pm. The next Saturday opening will occur on March 3, 2012. This trial initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the Archives on weekdays during normal business hours. It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.

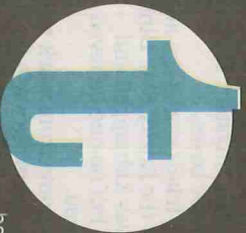
what you need to know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 69225 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



The last remnant of the Tarcutta Street Hospital – the Chisholm Fountain, now housed in the Victory Memorial Gardens.

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



he Chisholm Fountain, 137 years old and now a major feature of the Victory Memorial Gardens, represents a significant piece of Wagga's history – the town's first purpose-built hospital.

As no provision for a hospital had been made during the town's proclamation in 1849, it was decided to raise funds from public donations and the appropriation of court fines. The first hospital opened in 1856 in a rented house in Kincaid Street, and was serviced by the town's first resident doctor – Dr Allen Bradley Morgan (after whom Morgan Street was named). However, this site soon proved to be unsuitable and a resolution was made two years later to acquire a new location to build a more appropriate hospital to better service the community. This new hospital was built in 1860 on the corner of Johnston and Tarcutta streets (the site of the current police station).

From contemporary descriptions, it was a U-shaped brick building containing five wards, with six beds in each ward and a dining room centrally positioned for general use. It also contained a dead house, or morgue, which became a source of dispute as the police

Hospital beginnings for Chisholm Fountain

also wished to use it to house corpses for coronial enquiry. The hospital was concerned that the decomposed state of coronial subjects would be hazardous to the health of patients and staff, and succeeded in placing a ban on its use by any external agency.

It was in 1885 that Fredrick Chisholm gifted a fountain to the hospital. Chisholm owned the station "Bulls Run" and had recently succeeded Angus Robertson to become the fourth president of the hospital.

The fountain was purchased in England and was actually installed in 1885, but was not functional until 12 months later when the mains water was connected.

As well as adding an attractive feature to the gardens, the fountain fulfilled a practical purpose – flushing the drains of effluent into a sump near the river, thus improving hygiene and disease control. Awareness of sanitation and hygiene was far from contemporary standards. However, as patients were not encouraged to bath, and often not able to, the bathing room had become an overflow ward.

By the 1880s conditions had deteriorated, with the hospital having many issues of hygiene and over-crowding, and at one stage during a typhus epidemic patients were even housed in a tent. Improvements were made, but by the turn of the century the site proved to be completely inadequate after outbreaks of serious and

infectious diseases, and was unable to cater for Wagga's growing population of 7000.

A new hospital was opened in 1910 on the site of the current Wagga Base Hospital, and most importantly, it proudly boasted a septic tank, installed at considerable cost.

Now redundant in terms of plumbing, the fountain was installed in the north-west corner of the Victory Memorial Gardens in 1929. It was moved to the site of the Civic Centre in 1977, before being restored and permanently located in its current position in 2005.

The fountain is more than a garden feature: it also represents the history of the town in terms of the provision of health care and fulfils the original design for the Victory Memorial Gardens as a place of remembrance for the war dead.

■ Compiled by Leonie Moore

■ References: Sherry Morris, *A Delicate Balance: A History of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital*, Wagga Wagga, 1999; Robertson, J. Edward, *The Progress of Wagga Wagga and District: The Commercial Centre of the Riverina*, Melbourne, 1914; Keith Swan, *A History of Wagga Wagga*, Wagga Wagga, 1970; *Chisholm Fountain signage*, Victory Memorial Gardens, Wagga Wagga; *The Daily Advertiser 125 Years Special Edition*, Thursday October 14, 1993; Lennon Collection, CSURA [RW1574/575]