

Details

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the 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 inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage. ■ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Did you know South Campus was once a RAAF HOSPITAL?

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



M

ost long-time residents of Wagga are aware of the fact that the South Campus of Charles Sturt University has had a long and distinguished association with education in the city over an

extended period of time.

In 1972, the site became the first campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education (RCAE), and prior to this, beginning in 1947, it was also home to the Wagga Teachers' College.

The fact that the same site was also a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Hospital during World War II is probably a less well-known fact. The Number 1 RAAF Hospital was originally established at Laverton in September 1940, however it was moved to Forest Hill in May 1942.

Here the hospital undertook the treatment of all RAAF patients, as well as army personnel from across the district who were seriously ill or required surgery.

The influx of patients proved too great however and in October 1942 the Air Board decided to build a new hospital in Turvey Park.

The parcel of land identified was just over 24 acres in size and was owned by the Murrumbidgee Pastoral & Agricultural Association and Mrs MJ Peacock.

The area had primarily been used by the association for vehicle parking during the annual Wagga show, however it had been acquired by the Commonwealth Government at a cost of £2050, for the possible development and future expansion of the RAAF under the provisions of the National Security (General) Regulations during wartime.

The new buildings were designed to accommodate 150 patients and were completed in January 1944 at a cost of \$67,797.

The staff of the unit were transferred to the new hospital on January 23 and 24, 1944.

The buildings on the site included: an administration hut, stores hut, boiler house, mortuary and ambulance shelter, kitchen hut, mess hut, operating building, outpatients hut, a flexible ward accommodating 32 beds, a second ward accommodating 38 beds, four pre-fabricated ward huts each accommodating 20 beds and two huts for ward service rooms adjacent to the portable ward huts.

In addition, there were the staff quarters which comprised the officers' sleeping hut, nurses' sleeping hut, two WAAAF sleeping huts, 12 tents for the airmen and toilet huts for all ranks.

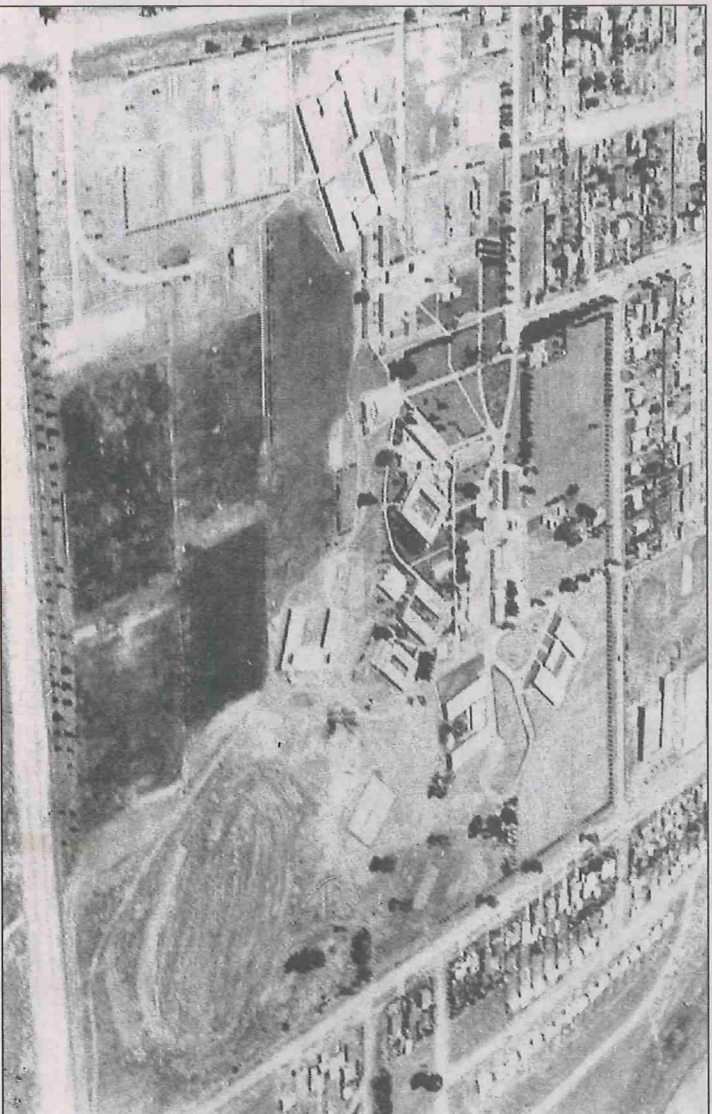
Obviously, the extent of these facilities later proved very attractive to those supporters, advocating the establishment of a teachers' college on the site.

By early 1946, the activities of the Number 1 RAAF Hospital had decreased to the extent where they could be satisfactorily managed by the sick quarters of the Ground Training School at Forest Hill.

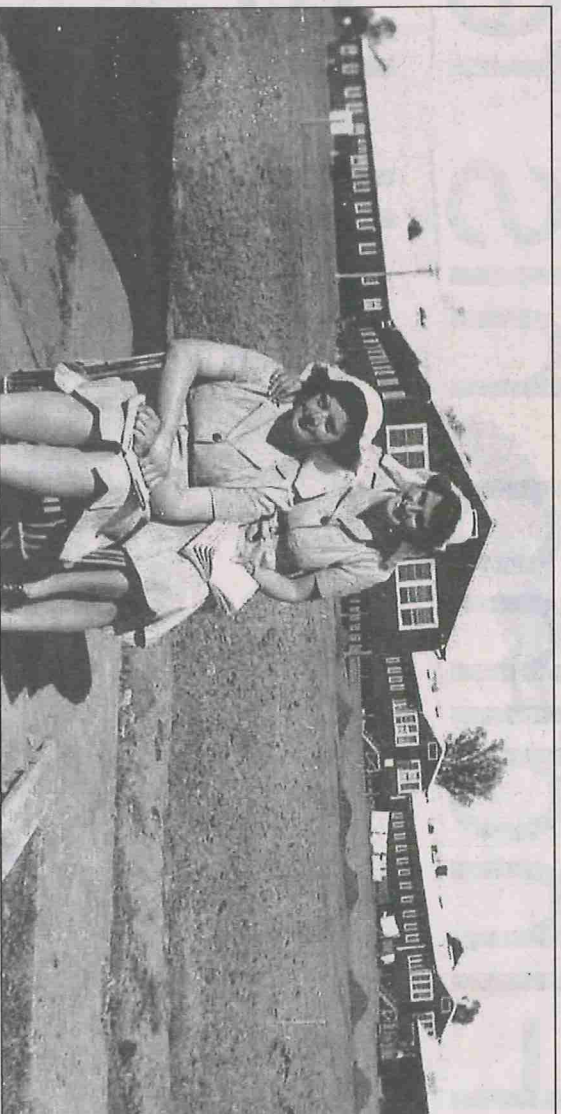
Consequently the Number 1 RAAF Hospital ceased to function on February 18, 1946.

Support for the establishment of a teachers' college on the site gathered momentum, and on May 31, 1946 the Minister for Education (RJ Heffron) and the Minister for Agriculture and Member for Wagga (EH Graham) announced that the RAAF Hospital premises were ideal for a future educational institution.

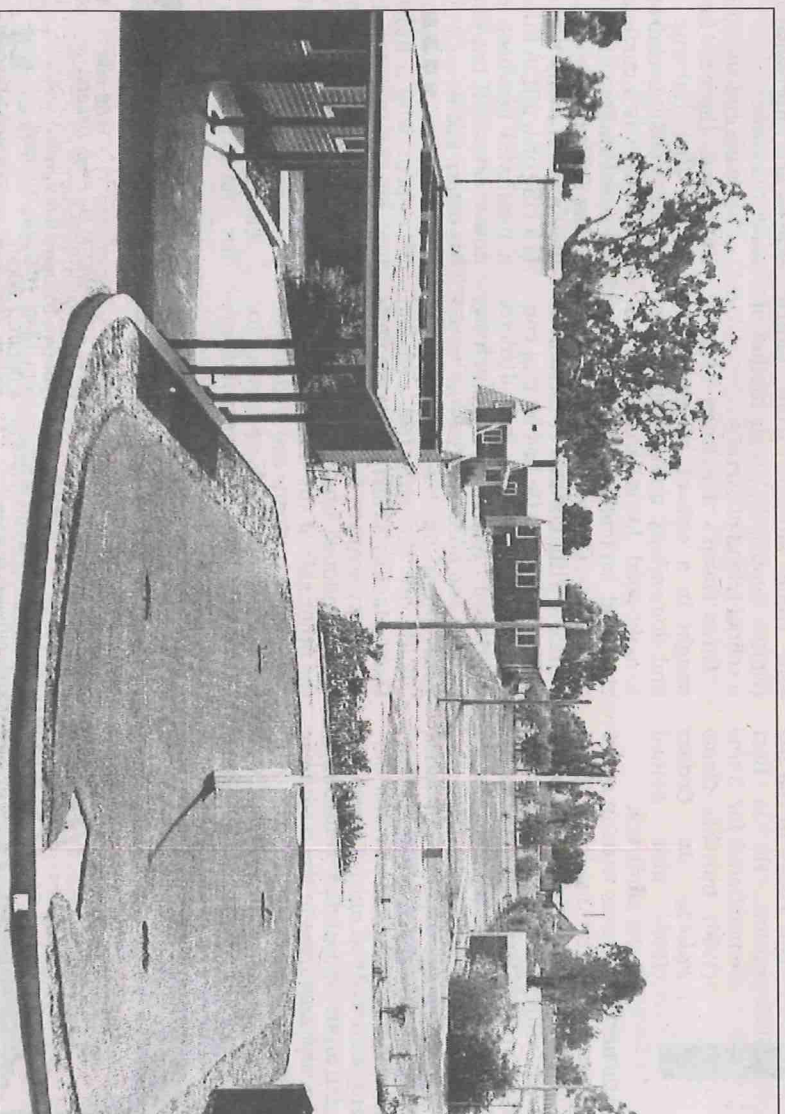
Shortly afterwards in July 1946 advice was received from the RAAF that they had no further use for the hospital buildings and attempts would be made to sell off the assets and the property.



Aerial photo of RAAF Hospital site c.1947 (CSURA – SA1/325).



Corporal Mappay and AGU Cameron in front of the RAAF Hospital, September 1944 (CSURA – RW1572).



Site as vacated by RAAF before taken over by Wagga Teachers' College c.1947 (CSURA – SA1/317).

The Minister for Education later authorised the purchase of the land and the buildings for a price of £12,500. The hospital was in operation at the site for

just over two years however, as local historian Keith Swan surmised, "Number 1 RAAF Hospital had a short but busy existence on this site".

■ **References:**
Wagga Wagga – A History by Sherry Morris, p. 196;
Wagga Wagga Teachers College: Its Site & Establishment by KJ Swan (CSURA – SA1/5); A Brief History of No. 1 RAAF Hospital (CSURA – SA1/3).