

Extracts from Memoirs of Alan Jenkinson 1928-2012

1949.....So the next week or two was spent in reading the local adverts in the Evening Telegraph for any likely position of a clerical nature.

How strange therefore that as I was turning down a posting to the Ministry of Health, the local paper was advertising several posts in the new National Health Service with the creation of the Kettering & District Hospital Management Committee for Accounts and Wages Clerks in the newly formed Finance Department. My application went in smartly and I was pleased to be asked to go for an interview.

I remember being interviewed by the newly appointed Finance Officer, Bernard W. Bell and his Deputy, Geoffrey Toseland. Later I was to learn that "Bunger" Bell had been recruited from a Local Government post, whilst Geof Toseland was already in employment at the Kettering General Hospital. Whether it was my smart demob suit or not, but they were appointing more older personnel with experience, but me being a mere 20yrs old was viewed as a trifle young - but nevertheless they could offer me a glorified Office boy's position. So on 27th February 1949, I caught the bus from Corby walked down Northall Street and up the Rothwell Road to the KGH to meet the rest of the newly appointed older staff of the Finance Department who had mainly cycled from their homes in Kettering. Ernest Maden, Jervis Summerhill, John Hine, a pipe smoking Mr. Perkins and of course, Eric English, recruited from the Kettering Bus Station staff. Eric made a good impression on me straightaway, as he came in a trifle late, puffing hard as he'd cycled up Hospital Hill and had only come to say he had a heavy cold, so he couldn't come to work - and off he went !

Thus began the beginning of the Kettering & District Hospital Management Committee's responsibility to bind together the hospitals and institutions in the Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Oundle areas into a centralised operation under the guidance of the Oxford Regional Hospital Board.

George William Jackson was the first Group Secretary, George Fennel was Hospital Secretary at Kettering and Agnes Jackson was its old style Matron. In those early days the common purpose to form a co-ordinated structure was a real challenge particularly as it was before the advent of computers or even accounting machines but pay and accounting systems were needed to be introduced to hospitals that had been, up until then, markedly independent in outlook.

What a pity that no one took a photograph of all these new staff grouped round the one Board Room table in those first weeks of operation. The Group Secretary at one end of the table, Finance Officer at the other, the others spread around, all using the same "desk". Matron would call in from time to time, having arranged for morning coffee and afternoon tea to be delivered on a tray by members of the hospital domestic staff. They would be smartly dressed in different uniforms, morning and afternoons.

It was about three days after I had started, that my attention was drawn to a battered metal tray that sat on the high shelf above the fireplace in the Board Room. It was the outgoing post tray, someone had forgotten to tell me it needed emptying daily and its contents taken to the General Office of the Hospital on the ground floor for posting Yes, there was an urgent need for more acceptable accommodation to be provided, especially as the Board Room was situated directly above the Hospital kitchens and the aroma rising each day from the open windows

below was not exactly appetising. The earliest photograph of those original "Pioneers" shows a sample of their later, more acceptable huddled office accommodation, just below the original domestic staff accommodation in the Warren Hill block.

It is difficult for me to convey the "camaraderie" or "togetherness" of that early group of staff and the co-operative manner in which existing hospital staff members of all grades and disciplines faced the changing pattern of organisation and lines of communication in 1949 / 50. Those early days found the formation of a wide variety of social activities.

Staff Christmas Concerts, Bonfire night Displays and Guy competitions, the formation of a Hospital cricket team to play in the Mid-Northants Village League, and the growing need to provide a separate Staff Social Centre on site.

From 28th Feb 1949 to 31st July 1955 my duties varied between Accounts Clerk and Wages Clerk, becoming Chief Wages & Salaries Assistant from 1st August 1955 to 30th April 1969. I was appointed Deputy Treasurer on 1st May 1969, which post I held until 31st Dec 1973. From 1st January 1973 the post attracted additional duties until 9th Feb 1975. Re-organisation at this point, found me leaving Kettering to be Principal Admin. Assistant with the Northamptonshire Area Health Authority at Northampton from 10th Feb 1975, then Assistant Treasurer from 1st June 1977 until my retirement in 1989.