

Happy days spent in a sad job

YES I've been here a few years now," said George Day as he took a short break from his ever-ringing phone and calls from the doctors and police.

George, has in fact, been at Kettering General Hospital longer than anyone else there — 37 years to be exact.

His dedication was recently rewarded with a Long Service Gold Award.

Back in 1954 after leaving the army he tried his hand at the boot and shoe trade — 12 months on he knew it wasn't for him. That was when he spotted an advert for a hospital porter.

Mr Day has fond memories of days gone by when Kettering was nothing more than a cottage hospital.

Then the mainly female staff included a couple of surgeons, and X-Rays used to fill in by carrying out some surgery.

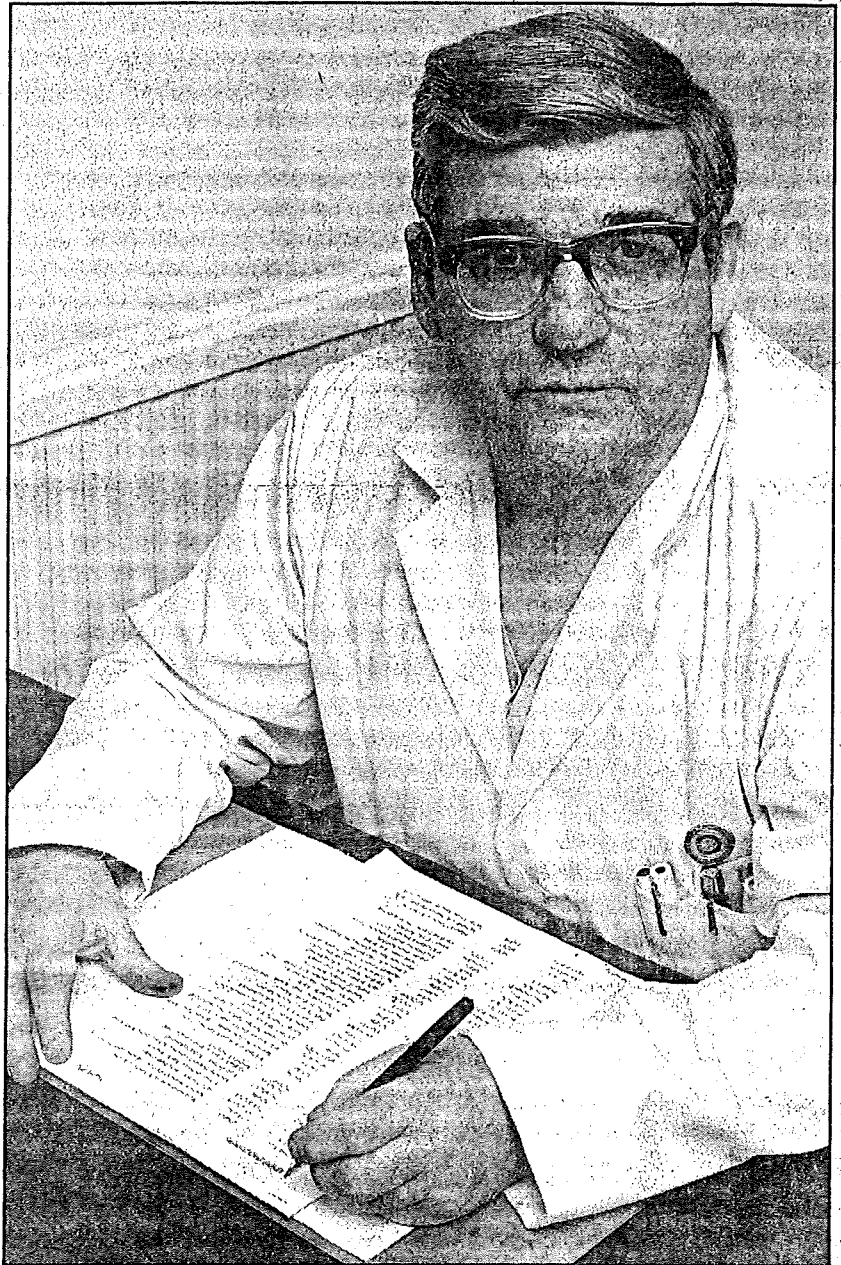
Once a week coachloads of locals arrived to play whist in the building which now houses the children's wards.

Mr Day said: "The porters used to put tables in the corridors for 200 people to come and play cards once a week. There was also a dance once a month. It was a happy hospital."

The gardens were full of fruit trees, flowers and a huge vegetable patch — enough in fact to feed staff and patients.

"We had two eminent surgeons, one was a real character and a gent, who used to pop up from Harley Street on a Wednesday.

"There were no domestic staff, there were maids who lived in and the porters had to do the cleaning in their



Fond memories came flooding back for Kettering General Hospital's longest-serving employee George Day when he spoke to Evening Telegraph reporter Karam Radwan

■ ALL IN A DAY'S WORK . . . George Day catches up on some paperwork at Kettering General Hospital

When he first started he organised between 180 and 200 post mortems a year and handled about 400 bodies. Now those figures stand at about 1,000 and 1,500.

His cases range from car crash to murder victims.

George's experience made him the ideal choice as the hospital's bereavement officer, a position he still holds today.

He said: "I like to think we can help people when they are at their lowest ebb."

Mr Day, now 64, is looking forward to his retirement next June.

"When I tell people I am an anatomical pathology technician they tend to look a bit baffled. When I explain, some say 'well I couldn't do that.' But there are plenty of jobs I would hate to do."

'quiet times'.

"The hospital was run by a Mr Bell who was based in a house aptly called The Homestead.

"On Christmas Eve all the staff would turn up to decorate the hospital, with decorations made by staff and patients.

"We used to hold a pantomime that we would take round to each ward. That was great fun, everyone would muck in.

"I certainly didn't come in for the salary. When I first started I took a

pay cut and worked more hours."

By 1962 George had climbed the ladder and was offered the post in the mortuary on a full-time basis and on a professional level.

He jumped at the chance. He was used to working in the environment.

"It wasn't a hard decision. I had an insight into it and there is a lot of job satisfaction.

"You are helping people at the time they need help most. In 1962 there were not all these counsellors."