

**The History of  
John Taylor Hospice 1910-2020**

(formerly known as Taylor Memorial Home of Rest TMHOR)

**110 Years of Making Every Moment Matter**



*Professor John Taylor*

## Introduction

Our story begins on 26 February 1910, the date that John William Taylor, a professor of gynaecology and surgeon at the Women's Hospital in Sparkhill, Birmingham, died. He had worked earlier in his career in general practice but after coming to Birmingham in 1877 he met and worked with the well-known surgeon, Lawson Tait and took up a post of surgeon at the Women's Hospital in 1884.

In addition to all his academic and medical work, John Taylor was also a poet and a very devout Christian. His first book was *The Coming of the Saints*, published in 1906 but he is better known for his anthology of poetry *The Doorkeeper and other Poems*, the first edition of which was published posthumously in 1910. Two other editions followed; the third in 1932 included additional poems found in his papers and a memoir of John Taylor, written by Florence Taylor, his wife, which has been a useful source of information for this history. In the memoir, Florence says that John's last message 'was his love to everybody and to "all the poor people." This makes it very fitting that his name should be associated with a Home of Rest for the Dying in connection with the Women's Hospital.'

Indeed, it was at a public meeting held at the Council House on 22 April 1910, that a statement by medical staff at the Women's Hospital was issued and read which outlined the need for a Home for women who only had a few weeks or month to live. 'The hospitals cannot afford to keep them; there is no acknowledged home for such patients in the Midlands, and the average Workhouse Infirmary is not the place to lightly suggest to many of these deserving and self-respecting poor, although it has to be the resort of the really destitute sick.' It was then decided at the meeting to set up a Home for such women and to name it after John Taylor as the cause of poor, dying women had been so close to his heart.

A management committee was formed to set up and manage the Taylor Memorial Home of Rest. It was chaired by Christopher Martin and the honorary secretary was Violet Aston. Christopher Martin was a surgeon at the Birmingham Women's Hospital, having moved from Edinburgh to work with Lawson Tait in 1890. He chaired the management committee at the Taylor Memorial Home from 1910 until his death in 1933. He was a much-loved doctor, described by one of his patients in a letter to the Birmingham Post as a 'modern Saint Christopher with halo and amusing stories.' He spent many hours sitting by the bedsides of patients in the TMHOR and he was a generous donor.



CHRISTOPHER MARTIN.

Violet Aston was honorary secretary to the management committee from when TMHOR was founded in 1910 until it was gifted to the NHS in 1948. She was very involved in the day to day running of the TMHOR and I am personally indebted to her for the fulsome records she kept including annual reports, committee meeting minutes, copies of correspondence and press cuttings. It is from these records that much of this history has been written. Unfortunately, I have not been permitted access to the Dudley Road Group of Hospitals Records from 1948 onwards and have had to rely on former members of staff for information about the 'NHS' years from 1948-2011. There are considerable gaps in the story and it should perhaps be noted that the main focus of this history is on the first forty years of the organisation.

There were other notable management committee members including Dr Mary Darby Sturge. She was a member of the well-known Quaker 'Sturge' family; her ancestor Joseph Sturge was an activist and was at the forefront of the movement to abolish slavery. Mary herself was a suffragette and a member of the Birmingham Society for Women's Suffrage. She was only the second qualified woman doctor in Birmingham and had to train in London because it was not yet an option for women in Birmingham. When she returned to Birmingham in 1895 she worked in the Women's Hospital as an anaesthetist and this is where she would have come into contact with John Taylor. Mary was the first President of the Medical Women's Federation from 1920-1922 where she campaigned for equal pay for women and for the removal of the marriage bar for women in medicine. As a member of the Management Committee for the Taylor Memorial Home, Mary Sturge set up a pension fund for nurses in 1923. Mary also co-wrote a book with Sir Victor Horsley, entitled 'Alcohol and the human body' which was first published in 1907. In an obituary for Mary Sturge, published in the British Medical Journal (21 March 1925), it stated that 'no book has had more influence in forwarding the cause of temperance.'

There can be no doubt that Dr Sturge was a leader among women who took up many causes during her lifetime, but the annual report for the Taylor Memorial Home for 1924 makes it clear that 'the one to which she was most devoted was undoubtedly the Taylor Memorial Home. From its inception she was its enthusiastic supporter and helper, and one of the last things she initiated during her active life was the scheme for building the Nurses' Home for more rooms for use as single wards for patients.'

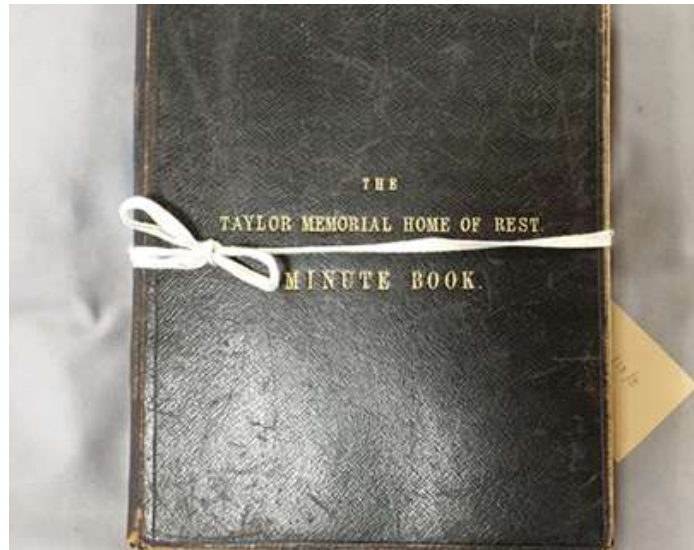


*Mary Darby Sturge*

The Committee took and furnished a small house on Park Road, in Sparkhill, close to the Women's Hospital and the home was opened officially by Mr Steel-Maitland MP, who had presided at the earlier public meeting to establish the Home, on 11 June 1910. The opening included a tour of the home and Christopher Martin hosted a tea party in the gardens of the Women's Hospital for guests. The TMHOR could accommodate 6 patients, although there were only 5 patients initially, and its upkeep was estimated to be £300 per annum, with £150 having been promised by the time it opened. (Daily Post, 13 June 1910).

Thus the Taylor Memorial Home of Rest opened, the only establishment of its kind in the Midlands and unlike some similar institutions in London, it was non-denominational from the very beginning, which made it unusual.

*Acknowledgments: I would like to thank my colleagues and family for their encouragement with this project, especially Scott Williams who assisted with taking photographs. I am grateful for the help of former staff, especially Liz Parsons MBE and the League of Friends. I also wish to thank the Library of Birmingham for their assistance with research in the archives. Many of the pictures are reproduced with the kind permission of the Library of Birmingham. I thank the National Archive for their help, especially with the material relating to the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund. Lastly, I thank members of the public who have passed on snippets of information to me which have helped to form the overall picture of a very special place.*



*TMHOR Minute Book held in the Birmingham Archive (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

## **The Premises**

It soon became apparent that the house in Park Road, Sparkhill, could not meet the demand for end of life care and in 1911, Showell Green House in Showell Green Lane, was secured at a low rent of £40 per annum from the Women's Hospital. Showell Green House could accommodate 20 patients. The costs of alterations was £1,207 15s 6d and £987 18s 0d was raised by donations with the balance being provided temporarily by an anonymous donor.

In 1914, electric light was installed in the home. The annual report stated that it had been paid for by an anonymous benefactor but the minutes of the management committee (15 September 1914) record that it was paid for by Christopher Martin.

The financial position of the home was at times, precarious, especially in the early years, when support was being established through subscriptions and the hike in costs of essentials eg coal during the First World War, had a significant impact on the bottom line. This resulted in decisions to improve the estate being deferred, for example increasing sanitary arrangements for patients in 1915, or only smaller projects being agreed such as the purchase of a new range in 1912.

The grounds at Showell Green House were quite extensive. They were cared for by Bates, the gardener. The Management Committee minutes of 10 November 1916 record that Bates had been called up for military service and arrangements for a man to come in and work in the garden odd days in the week was made until Bates' return in 1918. In the meantime, it was agreed that Mrs Bates should receive an allowance of 7/6 per week. To help with some of the expense of upkeep, the greenhouses were let to J W Pass but he was found to have 'annexed the hayshed and was keeping fowls there without authorisation. The committee left the matter in Mr Aston's (husband of the Hon Secretary Maud Aston) to be dealt with.' (14 June 1912)

In 1917 there were issues with trespassing in the grounds because the fences were in a poor state of repair. Estimates for barbed wire and new fencing were obtained and the grounds were made secure. In 1922, a request was received from a Mr Perry in Park Road asking for strip of land from the Home's grounds to be let to local residents. This was turned down by the management committee.

In the early 1920s, the management committee turned its attention to the accommodation it provided for staff. In the annual report for 1923, a resolution was passed to build suitable quarters for nursing and domestic staff at a cost of between £3,000 and £4,000. 'Some of the nurses' bedrooms were next to or above patients' rooms and it was thought necessary, especially on account of the distressing type of cases nursed at the Home, that the sleeping quarters of the nurses should be quite separate from the Hospital part.' In addition, the maids were being accommodated in old outbuildings which was not deemed satisfactory. Plans were drawn up by the architect, Cyril Martin, a member of the management committee and an appeal was launched to raise the funds. The following year, Dr Mary Sturge, sadly died. The money raised in her memory was used to build the extension to Showell Green House to accommodate the nurses and domestic staff, which was named "The Dr Mary Sturge Memorial Wing." Amongst the donors were her brothers and sisters who gave £1,000 and the Federation of Medical Women donated £210 to convert two rooms previously for nurses into private wards.

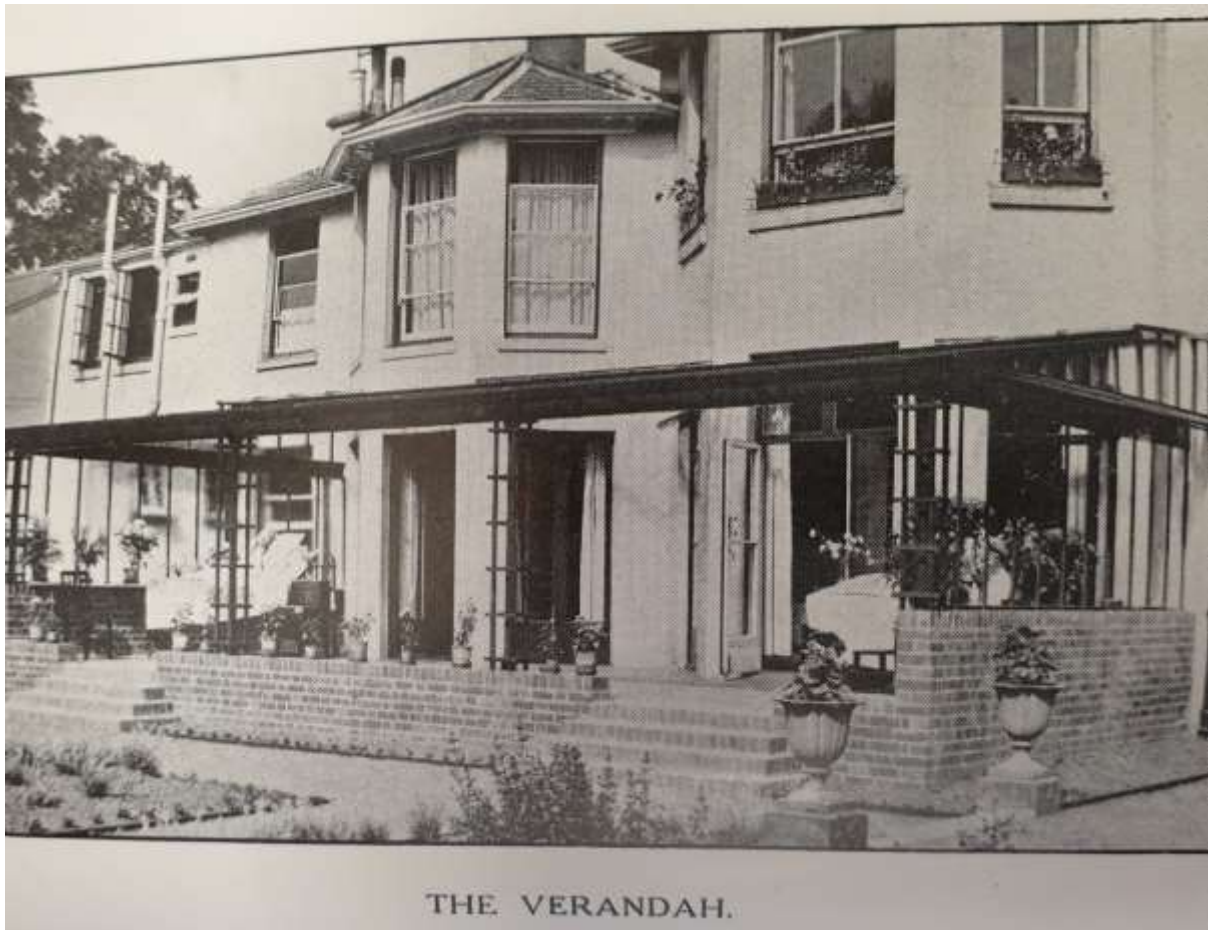


THE TAYLOR MEMORIAL HOME OF REST,  
SHOWELL GREEN LANE, SPARKHILL.

Established June, 1910. Supported by Voluntary Contributions.  
No. of Beds, 19.

*Taylor Memorial Home with The Dr Mary Sturge Memorial Wing shown on the right (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

In the late 1920s, worn bedsteads were replaced and new carpets bought for the nurses' room and patients' sitting room. In 1931 a verandah was added to the front of the Home, paid for by a Mrs Sheffield in memory of her brother. The verandah was south facing and overlooked the garden which was planted up with additional trees and flowers at the same time. Mrs Aston reported at the Management Committee meeting held on 4 December 1931: 'The verandah is proving a very great boon to the Home. Patients have been out there day and night ever since it was built.' It was agreed at that meeting to put electric lighting in the verandah. Later, blinds were purchased to keep the warmth in and it became de facto an extra ward which accommodated four patients, when the weather permitted.



*The verandah shortly after it was added to the front of Showell Green House ((reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

In 1932 alterations were made to the kitchen to create a washing up area and the scullery was made into a sitting and dining area for the maids. This work cost just over £200. At the same time there were discussions about replacing the hot water boiler; the issue of not having enough hot water for the needs of the Home seems to have been a perennial problem. In 1933, work was put in hand to repair and decorate the mortuary.

In 1934 a fire inspection was carried out and new and more appliances were purchased. The nurses, maids and gardener were instructed in the use of the fire appliances but a decision to provide a fire escape from the first floor was deferred.

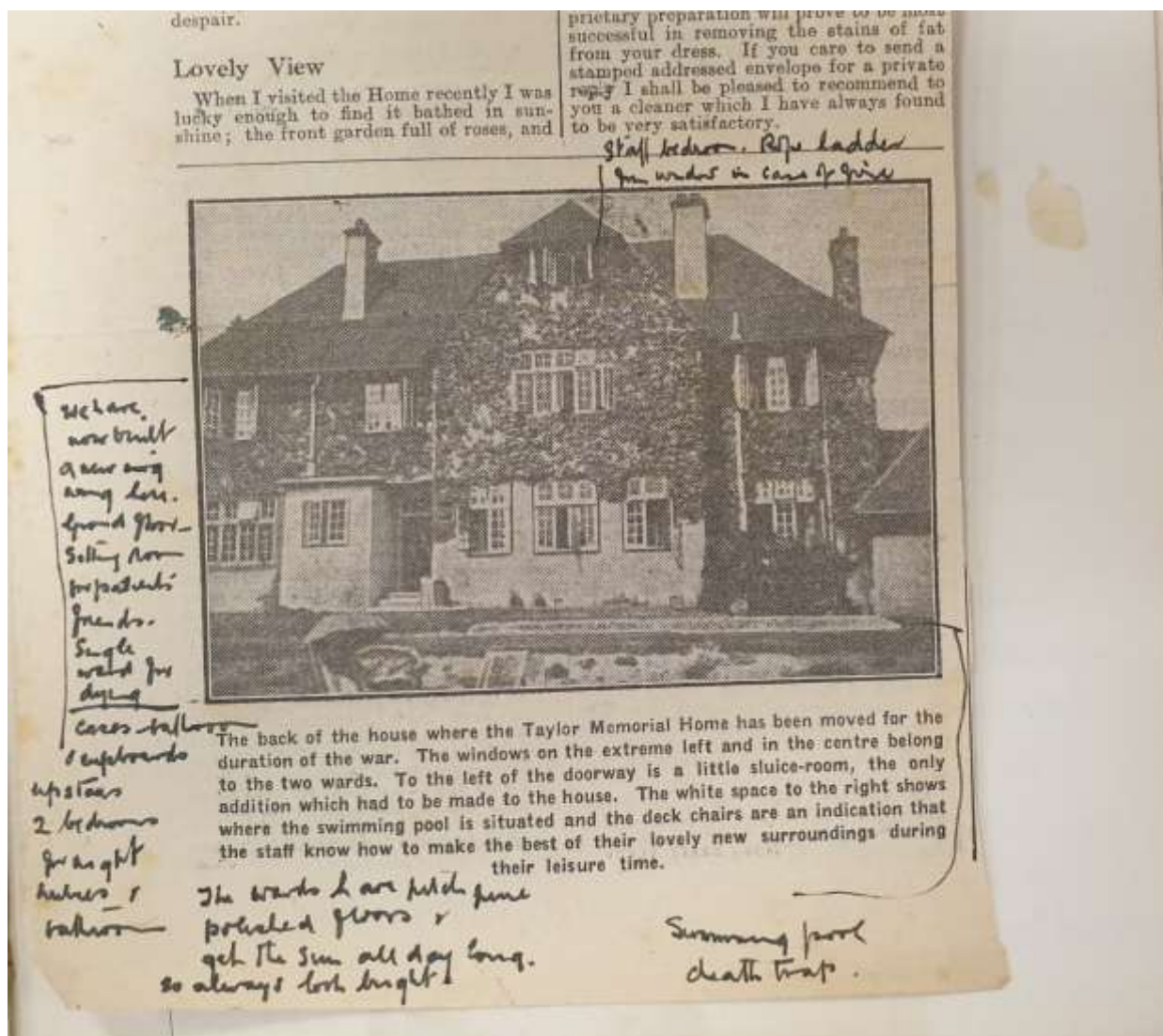
A donation from the Taylor family made in memory of Florence Taylor, John's wife, paid for electricity to be installed in the mortuary chapel. In the 1930s a new wireless set was donated to the Home and a fridge. The installation of central heating was discussed by the management committee in 1936/7 but the costs were deemed to be prohibitive so the really cold parts were tackled instead. A cosy store heater was purchased for the Nurses' Room and a gas radiator for the front hall. The gas-fired boiler and hot water plant was to be used to heat the wards at night and in intensely cold weather.



In 1938, a gift from the Water Orton League, paid for the yard outside the mortuary to be made into a more attractive garden area.

The TMHOR never had its own laundry facilities and from the beginning laundry was sent to the Women's Hospital. In 1918, the Management Committee agreed it should pay £1 per week in the future to the hospital for its help with the laundry, having only paid a nominal amount up until that point. At the meeting of the Management Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1933, a request from the Committee of the Women's Hospital had been received asking if washing from the Home could be disinfected before sending to the laundry. Mrs Aston was tasked with finding out the best means by which this could be done. In May of that year the Management Committee heard that Sister Steele was consulting with the Women's Hospital about how the Home's washin could be sterilised/fumigated. There is no further mention of laundry issues until December 1936 when it was reported that the Women's Hospital had said 'No' to doing any more of the TMHOR's laundry as their own had increased so much. The Management Committee agreed to send the washing to another laundry for an initial period of 6 months. In June of the following year, a further six months was approved and Mirror Laundry continued to do the Home's washing.

Between 17 May 1939 and 10 September 1941 there were no meetings of the Management Committee, although there are no breaks in the annual reports for these years. At the meeting on 10 September 1941, Mrs Aston reported that the TMHOR had been closed just before Christmas 1940. Bombs had dropped in the grounds and it was not possible to move very ill patients during air raids. The Home was moved temporarily to White Lodge in Cannock. White Lodge was bought freehold for £2,500 and after some alterations, the Home re-opened in June 1941. Later that year, permission was granted by the Ministry of Health for an extension to White Lodge and a new wing was finished in 1942.



Picture of White Lodge in Cannock; the amusing hand written notes are Violet Aston's (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)

At the end of 1943, the committee started to look at returning to Showell Green House and the costs associated with it. The house in Sparkhill was being used to house girls working at a local munitions factory. There were plans to put a lift in at the house in Sparkhill. This planning continued in 1944 but by May 1945, Mrs Aston had not heard officially but had got wind that the Women's Hospital did not wish the Taylor Home to have the fruit and vegetable garden on their return. 'As the garden has always been the greatest amenity of the Home – apart from the fact that it supplies vegetables for the greater part of the year – the Committee agreed that spending the considerable sum they had contemplated on the reconstruction of the Home would be most inadvisable (24 May 1945). By the time of the next management committee meeting on 29 August 1945, Mrs Aston had received a letter from the Governor of the Women's Hospital stating that the Hospital Committee had

indeed decided not to grant permission for fruit and vegetables to be gathered for the Home from the grounds of Showell Green House. Also by the time of this meeting, the TMHOR had been informed that the Women's Hospital had plans to build on the site of Showell Green House and on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, TMHOR's solicitor, Wilfrid Matthews had received notice to quit from the Women's Hospital's solicitor. He had responded on behalf of the Committee expressing their shock at the 'attitude of the Women's Hospital.....It was always understood by the two committees that Showell Green House was a permanent Home for the Taylor Memorial.'

At the same meeting, Mrs Aston reported that she had been looking for a suitable house and had inspected several including The Grange at Erdington. She had consulted with various members of the committee who had also inspected the property and on 29 July 1945 The Grange had been purchased for £2,500 with an adjacent plot of land being bought for £250. It was proposed that Mrs Aston's actions be approved and it was agreed that a caretaker/gardener should be appointed as soon as possible. The plot was purchased to prevent a house being built which would overlook the Home and it was suggested in the annual report for 18 months ending 30/6/1948 that it could be used for a vegetable garden or nurses' home.



*Plan showing the land owned by the Taylor Memorial Home on Greenside Road when it purchased The Grange in 1945 (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

At the next meeting held at the end of November 1945, there had been no luck in appointing a gardener/caretaker although it was suggested that one should be

brought in for a few days to clear the overgrown garden. In the meantime, Mrs Aston had allowed a young couple to live in The Grange as she was keen for the house to be occupied and it kept people from getting in. It was decided that the TMHOR should vacate Showell Green House as soon as possible as some of its belongings, including furniture were still being stored there. At the meeting in January 1946 it was reported that the furniture had been moved to The Grange and the Women's Hospital Committee had offered £500 as compensation for the loss of the Home. Showell Green House was later demolished and part of the new Women's Hospital was built on the land the house had once occupied. It is also interesting to note that in spite of its recent purchase of The Grange, the committee had recently considered Bushwood Nursing Home in Edgbaston as a possible future place for the TMHOR to try and save on the expense of converting The Grange.

The Grange was a fine house which had been the home of the Erdington MP and pioneer photographer Sir Benjamin Stone and his family.



The Grange, 1877. The estate agent's description of 1919 gives a picture of the house. 'The land in front contains a large number of forest trees and has a sloping lawn from the windows of the dinning and drawing rooms... porched and tiled entrance hall, morning room, drawing room, dining room, billiard room, smoking room, housemaid's pantry, glass pantry, housekeeper's room, kitchen, two cellars, scullery, bathroom, five large bedrooms, two maids rooms, box room and observatory, nursery, library, underground fernery, outside fernery and adjoining hall, motor house (heated with hot pipes) accomodating two motors, workshop, stables for two horses (including loft, harness room, loose box and two stall stable) coach house for two carriages, conservatory, potting shed, flower garden, full size tennis lawn, kitchen garden, orchard and external shrubbery etc.'

*Picture courtesy of the Erdington History Group*

By the end of the Second World War, the house and grounds were in a poor state of repair. The house had been occupied by the RAF for four years and there were bomb shelters and a Nissan Hut in the gardens. The Air Ministry provided £117.11s.0d for the demolition of the hut and shelters which were removed in 1946 at an eventual cost of over £300. At the same time a brick wall was built between the garden of The Grange and the house in Greenside Road. That wall is still in place to this day. The plot which had been purchased opposite The Grange on the

corner of Greenside Road was also fenced in. At the general committee meeting of 7 October 1946, it was reported that a demobbed soldier was not caretaking at The Grange and was doing some gardening. Early in 1947, it was reported that he had coped with children trying to break into the house and water pouring into the hall from the glass dome.

Plans for extensive alterations and repairs to The Grange were submitted to the government in 1946 but final approval and a licence for the works was not granted until November 1947, because the plans for the mortuary had to be revised to include 'a body storage space with refrigerator if necessary and a small viewing room adjoining.' (Letter from the Ministry of Health, 12 November 1947).

At the committee meeting held on 14 May 1948, it was noted that the builders were now getting on with the alterations and repairs at The Grange. It was agreed that a plaque would be erected in The Grange listing the names of the chief benefactors of the Home and those of the members of the committee and officers of the charity since its foundation in June 1910. This plaque is still on the wall in the lobby outside the In Patient Unit.

Neither the minutes nor the annual reports note a firm decision that the TMHOR would be transferred into the National Health Service in July 1948. However, the situation at White Lodge in Cannock had become dire by the end of the war because of staffing shortages and for a period in 1946 it was closed and when it re-opened only convalescent patients were admitted because there were not sufficient nursing staff to support patients needing end of life care. There are also more and more references in the late 1930s in the management committee minutes to the need to recruit younger people to run the TMHOR because many of the original members of the committee had died or were getting too elderly to do the work. Although there was a real determination amongst the remaining members of the committee that the 'beneficent work of the Taylor Home will be carried on' and an acknowledgement that the 'new home should prove to be a valuable addition to the hospital services of the City' (annual meeting 12/12/47), it could be concluded that they did not have the energy to oversee the charity any longer and saw joining the NHS as the best solution. Finance was not a concern because the earlier hard work the committee members had put in to securing subscriptions and legacies had paid off and the TMHOR was no longer in deficit as it had been for most of its history leading up to the Second World War. Indeed in notes of business kept by Violet Aston between the last committee meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> May and the transfer of the Home to the Ministry of Health on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1948, she records that the balance in the bank of £7,616.16.11 was transferred to the Ministry of Health together with the Deeds for White Lodge and The Grange and all stocks and shares owned by the TMHOR. Until recently, White Lodge was used as a residential home for adults with learning disabilities. The only funds not transferred to the Ministry of Health are The Lady Herbert Memorial Fund, more of which later in this history and Mrs Williams' Fund. Mrs Williams had started collecting monies for an extension to the verandah at Sparkhill in 1938. With the advent of the war, this project was not fulfilled and ten years later, the fund

amounted to £1,449.4s.4d. Violet Aston asked permission from the Ministry of Health for the money to be used to build a verandah at The Grange and this was given.

We know from press coverage that the alterations and redecoration at The Grange were completed in 1950. (Erdington News 22/4/1950). Mrs Aston's notes also reveal that dry rot was discovered in the woodwork at The Grange in 1948 and it cost £1,750 to eradicate it. All the alterations were paid for by the TMHOR itself and press cuttings relating to the purchase of The Grange and the alterations suggest that the overall costs were around £10,000.

The plot of land across the road from the Home on Greenside Road must have been sold by the NHS for housing as two bungalows and a house now stand on it. Old maps indicate that this must have happened in the 1950s. Perhaps in order for the TMHOR not to be overlooked, the stipulation for the new properties was that they had to be bungalows. Evidently, the land was not used to house nurses which had been one of the proposals for it when the management committee purchased The Grange. Indeed Pat Murr, a nurse at the TMHOR has confirmed that when she was nurse in the Home in the 1950s, two ward sisters lived in a flat upstairs in The Grange and the large room at the end, now the Fundraising Team's office, was used for social events. Liz Parsons, who was matron of the TMHOR, later known as John Taylor Hospice, from 1975 for the next 30 years, told me that she was the first matron not to live in.

On 24 January 1961, fire broke out at The Grange in the middle of the night. Gordon Wheeler, who lived on Greenside Road and was 17 years old at the time, recalls how he and his brother were woken up in the night by his father to help move patients to a place of safety. Unfortunately, I have been unable to gather more information about the fire from press cuttings or other local sources.

In the 1990s a new £1 million wing was added to the hospice, largely paid for by the League of Friends of John Taylor Hospice. This was officially opened by Robin Corbett, the MP for Erdington in 1997. Work was done on the garden and a courtyard was built in the centre of the new block. This has now been covered in and forms part of the Day Hospice.

In 2011 John Taylor Hospice came out of the NHS and became a community interest company with staff being members of the organisation.

In 2013 the hospice purchased 74, Grange Road, the house next to the hospice building. This is used for meetings by the hospice and is also home to an art therapy room for clients of the Wellbeing Team.

In 2018 a decision was made by the board of directors to convert from being a CIC to a charity. This allowed for the governance of the organisation to be simplified, for more trustees to be appointed to the board rather than a few non-executive directors and, most importantly from a financial perspective, permitted the hospice to claim back VAT on goods and services.

In 2019, the League of Friends for John Taylor Hospice merged with the hospice charity and number 72, Grange Road, was acquired for hospice use. The hospice building itself is still leased from the NHS.



*Foundations being laid for the new wing of the Inpatient Unit at John Taylor Hospice 1994*

## **The Patients**

The annual reports are a useful source of information in terms of data around admissions, discharges and deaths and length of stay. There are also some references to typical cases and occasionally some moving individual patient stories. There are also some wonderful descriptions of how patients and their families were helped to make every moment matter. The holistic approach to care which is a characteristic of the modern hospice movement was very much in evidence in the early days of TMHOR. As is the case today, it was often small things which made the difference for a patient and her family.



In the first annual report for the year ending 31 December 1910, there were 10 admissions and seven patients died. One patient was discharged, being an 'unsuitable case.' Two patients were discharged and were able to take up work again, albeit temporarily. This shows that even in the earliest days, patients were helped with symptom-control and were able to go home again, just as they are today. The first annual report also gives an account of 'typical cases received at the Home.'

'A. – 35. Hopeless, inoperable cancer. 6 children, eldest 12 a boy; youngest 11 months. No relation able to look after her. While she was in the Home the boy managed the house and children and got his father's meals, and on Saturday evenings came to sit with his mother to tell her all he had been doing during the week.

B. Woman aged 40. Suffering from cancer. No friends. Found in lodgings, very much in debt.

C. Very old woman with inoperable cancer. Able to pay a little. Only relations two nieces; most thankful to find a home where she could be properly nursed and cared for.

D. Domestic servant. Dying of cancer. No relatives except a sister in service.'

Notable in this description is the reference to patient C being able to pay a little. In the early days of the TMHOR the Management Committee hoped to get some income from paying patients. In 1911 the amount received from patients was £26 1s.6d but in reality, very little income came in this way. In 1912 the objects of the home were listed in the annual report:

'That the object of this Home shall be exclusively the reception and nursing of women suffering from incurable disease. Patients shall be admitted from the In-Patient Department of the Birmingham and Midlands Hospital for Women. The patients or friends of patients when possible will be expected to pay what they can towards the cost of maintenance.'

Patients were not turned away if they could not or would not pay, even patients who were difficult. In 1935 Mrs Aston reported to the management committee that one of the patients who had been in the home four and a half years had been moved to a private ward because she has been upsetting the patients in the large ward.

'Though it was thought that her relatives could quite afford to pay the reduced fee of 30s per week, they had refused to do so.' (minutes, management committee meeting 11/10/1935). Of course Mr Aston was asked to see the relatives to work out what arrangements for payment could be made but no resolution of the issue was noted in later meeting minutes.

From 1911-1922 the annual reports record the average length of stay as being around 3-4 months which seems a long time compared to today when it is nearer to 10-14 days. The pressure for beds is mentioned continually in the minutes and

annual reports, although in 1934, 76 patients were admitted, the greatest number to date, this being made possible by the addition of the verandah where another 4 beds were placed.

One of the most striking things about the annual reports and the minutes is the language used to describe patients and their illnesses. It is not in the least politically correct and can seem jarring to the modern ear. Words such as hopeless and incurable seem harsh but are freely used, even on the inside cover of the annual reports from 1914 onwards: 'The Home was opened in June, 1910, for the reception of women suffering from incurable malignant disease. Its object is to nurse cases during the very last stages of the illness and to relieve the physical and mental suffering as much as possible.'

In 1935 the TMHOR was given the opportunity to make an appeal on BBC Radio to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Home and even though it could be said that the appeal needed to be hard hitting and to stir the emotions of the listeners, the language used was certainly uncompromising:

'The Taylor Memorial Home is not, as you may think, from its name, a convalescent Home. Its object is to nurse women suffering from incurable malignant disease in its last stages. ....At the Taylor Home, we take in these sad cases and by good and careful nursing we try to relive their physical and mental suffering and to make the inevitable as bearable as possible. Unlike other institutions, we cannot claim wonderful cures, and get a certain amount of advertisement from them, as the tongues of those who would be the first to return thanks for its blessings are still for ever and, in consequence, it is not so widely known as it ought to be.'

However, it could be said that the appeal was successful as it raised over £200 for the TMHOR and raised its profile.

In 1936 the TMHOR was featured in an appeal brochure for the Birmingham and Midland Hospital for women which included a picture of the Home and descriptions of patients who had received care. One of the cases quoted is moving because it describes not only the nursing care for the patient but how the home helped to bring about a family reconciliation before the patient died.

'A young Coventry school teacher in the prime of life...As the growth had gone too far for removal, she was passed on to the "Taylor." She could not find words to express her praise of the Home, often saying: "Why it is like heaven to be nursed like this." Not only was she nursed, but an estrangement between her and her mother in the North of England was removed through the mediation of the matron, after which the mother came and stayed near her daughter to the end.'

The 1935 Annual Report tells the story of another patient for whom the Home arranged a reunion with her mother before her death:

"In summer, when the weather is suitable, those patients who are fit are taken for drives, the money for this being provided from the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund.

One of the patients had a great longing to see her mother who lived in the country. It seemed to be her only wish. She and four other patients and a nurse were taken for a drive to the village where the mother lived and, while the others had a picnic tea by the wayside, she was able to visit her mother and to have tea with her. She returned to the Home a much happier woman and until her death a month later never ceased to talk of the happy reunion."

Whenever funds permitted and even when they did not, but the occasion for a celebration arose, the patients were given treats. On Coronation Day in 1937, a tea party was held and patients that were well enough were taken for a drive around the town to see the decorations. Birthdays were celebrated with each patient receiving gifts on her breakfast tray and a special tea was laid on for friends and relatives who were able to be with her on the day. Wedding receptions were held at the Home for daughters of patients and for one patient who was too ill to be a bridesmaid at her sister's wedding, 'the wedding guests were invited to have tea with her, and it being summer weather a very happy little party was held in the garden.' (Annual Report, 1936). Special occasions such as weddings are still celebrated at the Hospice with patients getting married, sometimes in the garden if the weather allows, with family and friends present. Staff pull out all the stops to help create lasting memories for those who remain, especially partners of patients and young children.

These patient stories, whether more recent or a long time ago, demonstrate that the Taylor Memorial Home/John Taylor Hospice has always been about making every moment for the patient and their families. It is not necessarily in the grand gestures or expensive treats, but in the smaller ways a difference was and is made.



*The Verandah being used as an 'additional ward' for four patients (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

The spiritual care of the patients in the early days was largely Christian in nature. The 1915 annual report mentions that hymns and carols were sung in the wards on Christmas Day and local clergy came into the Home and were thanked regularly for their ministrations in the annual reports. In 1913 work was carried out on one of the outbuildings at Showell Green House to convert it into a mortuary chapel. Electricity was installed in the chapel in 1935 paid for from a £50 donation given by the children of John Taylor in memory of their mother Florence. Mention is made in 1942 of a sanctuary lamp being provided by Sir Bertram Ford for the chapel at White Lodge in Cannock.

A letter to a Birmingham newspaper from Canon H P Burgess of Wylde Green from c1980 states that he has been the 'official Chaplain for 17 years...and connected with the home for a longer period than that.' More recently, there have been chaplains and spiritual care co-ordinators and the hospice has a quiet room now rather than a chapel, which also has facilities for patients of other faiths. The hospice has had a long relationship with the Roman Catholic 'Abbey Church' in Erdington which has provided support to Catholic patients for many years. Although in its earlier days, the population of Birmingham was not as diverse as it is now, the TMHOR was not defined by any denomination with support coming from the Quakers and the Presbyterian Church as well as the Church of England. The 1917 Annual Report mentions a donation from the Birmingham Hebrew Ladies Society. It must be emphasised that the Home did not limit itself to accepting women patients from a particular sector of society; it was open to any woman in the Midlands who needed to be cared for at the end of life.

Anecdotal evidence from former and retired members of staff suggests that the Home began to care for men as well as women from the mid-1970s onwards although, interestingly, the Home did consider taking men in 1929-30, according to a newspaper report of the Annual General Meeting but it was felt there was already enough to do caring for women. Up until the 1970s, only women suffering from gynaecological cancers were treated and once the Home had joined the NHS, nurses working at what is now the City Hospital on Dudley Road in the gynaecological wards, were encouraged to come and work at the Home. Liz Parsons, matron at the TMHOR for thirty years from the mid 70s told me that after men were admitted, patients with all types of cancer began to be treated. Respite care was also provided and gradually during her time, up to 5 beds would be set aside for non-cancer patients. In more recent years, the hospice has employed a specialist respiratory nurse to help patients with life-limiting illnesses out in the community and a specialist neurological nurse to support patients with illnesses such as motor neurone disease and Parkinson's. The hospice has also provided outpatient clinics for patients with lymphoedema, a *Pari-Passu* Pain Clinic and a FAB (Fatigue, Anxiety and Breathlessness) Programme for patients with heart and lung conditions such as COPD.

The early records do not give as much of an insight into the clinical care given or how patients were referred in to the Home. In a report on the annual meeting in the Birmingham Daily Post of 15/7/1927, the nursing at the TMHOR gets special mention: 'Dr Kenneth McMillan said the relief patients received as the result of the splendid nursing at the home was immense. Without the use of powerful narcotic drugs the patients were comforted and relieved, and that was due to the right kind of nursing.'

In the first annual report for 1910, the committee thanked the 'matron and staff, recognising that the work is of particularly trying kind.' In 1914 it was noted in the annual report that the 'work in the Home is not like that of an ordinary hospital, where there is always the interest of the patient's recovery. Most of our patients only come when recovery is hopeless. The duties of the nurses are often arduous and disagreeable, but they are carried out in a conscientious manner and self-sacrificing spirit.' In the more modern era, we can only guess that the arduous duties must have centred around personal care for patients and making them as comfortable as possible. They did not have the benefit of specialist palliative care and medications to ease pain and control symptoms.

The 1912 Annual Report referred to at the start of this section (page 9) indicated that patients were admitted from the Inpatient department of the Birmingham and Midland Hospital for Women. At a meeting of the General Committee in October 1915 Matron reported that there had been some late referrals from the Women's Hospital of several patients and some of these had died within a day or two of admission to the Home which had upset and distressed the other patients.

An undated note found in the minute book consisting of a carbon copy of a resolution states that admissions should be referred to the surgeon on duty 'who shall have the power to refuse admission unless the patient is likely to die within the next three months – this refers especially to cases of colotomy.'

## **People**

On a day-to-day basis the matron was in charge at the TMHOR. Miss Hawkins, a sister at the Women's Hospital was appointed as the first matron by the general committee at a meeting in June 1910. However, her mornings were to be given to the hospital. Her salary on appointment was £35 per annum. The arrangements were clearly not satisfactory because by the time of the following committee meeting on 21 September 1910, Miss Hawkins had resigned and Miss Reid was appointed on the same salary. Miss Reid remained in post until 1930 when she had to retire due to ill health. Miss Reid was joined in the early years by nurses from the Women's

Hospital but during the First World War, that practice ceased as there was a shortage of nursing staff and Miss Reid had to advertise herself for the Home's own nurses.

Not many nurses are mentioned by name in the records but sometimes there is a mention of a sister or the salaries awarded to the nursing staff. In 1912 it was agreed that Sister Cooper's salary should be increased from £25 to £30 per annum, and in 1914 to raise Nurse Sainsbury's salary from £20 to £25 per annum. By 1916 Miss Reid's salary was being increased from £60 to £75 per annum, over double that which she had started on 6 years previously.

In the early years, all nursing and domestic staff were provided with accommodation on site as mentioned in the premises section. Perhaps with the provision of accommodation and a salary, it was deemed acceptable that the staff should pay for their own uniform. In 1912, the Management Committee decided to give uniform to the staff – 'they to pay for the making.' (Management Committee meeting minutes, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1912)

In 1918, the General Committee agreed to increase the salaries of staff as follows, in spite of a deficit forecast for the year of £500:

Miss Reid	£80
Nurses	£27-£30
	£25-£28
	£18-20
Cooks	£24-£28
Maids	£18-£20
	£16-£18

There appears from the records to have been a sort of pay structure for the staff. In later years, the records show that the Home adopted national guidelines on pay for nurses eg in 1943, the recommendations of the Rushcliffe Report were accepted.

One or two members of staff did give some cause for concern. One of the young nurses was found to be stealing in 1920. After a long discussion at the general committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December that year, and on matron's recommendation, it was decided to give her another chance to 'retrieve her character.'

Miss Reid seems to have been a remarkable matron. Not only did she oversee the day to day running of the TMHOR but she also organised much of the fundraising. In 1917 she and her staff arranged a garden sale which raised £120 to pay for the cleaning and decoration of the Home. In 1919 Miss Reid instituted a Pound Day which ran for many years. Donors were invited to visit the hospice and give a £1.

Some also gave gifts in kind. The first Pound Day raised £50 and several hundreds of pounds worth of goods were also given.

On 31 December 1929 Miss Reid wrote to Mrs Aston to give notice of her intention to resign from the post of matron in April 1930 saying:

'These 20 years have been the happiest in my life and I feel that your personal help & that of the committee have helped to make it so.....Very much I hope the post will be offered to Sister. You will not regret it if she is & she deserves it.'

Unfortunately, the committee did come to regret the 'coronation' of Sister Krausen as matron. At a meeting of the committee on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1933, Mrs Aston reported that she had 'received numerous letters and complaints about the present management of the Home. She reported fully the details and it was felt that though some of them were of a trifling character – in the aggregate they were very serious and that the atmosphere of the Home was by no means what it should be.' After a long discussion J W Saunders\* kindly promised to interview matron with Mrs Aston to see what could be done.' (From the minutes of the general committee Meeting 10/2/33). \* J W Saunders was made Chair of the Committee at this meeting following the death of the previous chair Dr Christopher Martin.

On 13 March 1933, a special meeting of the general committee was held to report on the meeting which Violet Aston and the chair had held with the matron. Matron Krausen had been asked to resign but she had refused to do so and wanted to put her case in person to the committee. The committee agreed to write to her saying that if she resigned, she would be given three months' salary and future premiums on both her insurance policies would be paid and her annuity until August 1935, when the insurance company would start paying out. The committee also agreed it would help her find another post as sister. This generous package had the desired effect and Miss Krausen left the TMHOR on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1933. She was replaced by Miss Crowther who remained in post until after the move to Erdington following the Second World War.

In the Second World War, Miss Crowther and her nursing staff pitched in when domestic staffing was short and helped with growing vegetables in the garden and Miss Crowther also did the cooking in the home. In the minutes of the committee meeting held on 26 November 1942, it was agreed that £12 should be given to the matron and nurses to share between them as recognition of their extra work for the Home. Staffing shortages during the Second World War were acute at White Lodge, not just in terms of domestic staff but nursing staff as well. In May 1945 the decision was made that the home should be closed for a while because of staff shortages and to enable the staff that were there to have a holiday. By August of that year White Lodge had re-opened but owing to the very small nursing staff, only six patients could be admitted. At a meeting of the committee on 30 November 1945, the committee noted that only five patients could be cared for by the three nurses and sister. A temporary closure was considered but Matron had thought they could continue for a bit longer. Unfortunately, the staffing situation did not improve

in 1946 and by October of that year, there remained only Sister Nickson with one assistant nurse, so the decision was made that only a limited number of patients could be admitted for convalescence from radium treatment. Dying patients could no longer be cared for at the Home. The situation worsened still further in 1947 when Sister Nickson had to be given 6 months leave as her brother's wife had died and a nurse was employed to come in daily to cover her. By the start of 1948, only Matron was left at Cannock and the decision had been made to transfer the Home into the NHS. The struggle to keep the home open during the war may well have been a contributory factor in the decision to move the Home in to the NHS. Other factors also played a part in the staffing shortages at Cannock and these were recognised in the annual report for 1947-8 and included the lack of adequate staff accommodation at White Lodge, the lack of interest from potential staff in moving out to Cannock and a shortage of local assistance. It was also difficult for relatives to get out to Cannock, both in terms of the distance from where they lived and the financial cost of transport to get out there to visit patients, many of whom were from Birmingham.

The contribution of the nursing staff and matrons was recognised by the committee who paid tribute to them in every annual report. The Home also tried to support staff and their families, for example assistance was given to Sister Krausen in 1926 with treatment costs when she was off sick with an illness and Matron Reid was awarded a pension of £75 per annum but sadly she died within 18 months of retiring in 1930. A grant of £30 was made in 1932 towards Miss Reid's headstone. In the annual report for 1944, the death was reported of Nurse Bronwen Rowlands, aged 35 years, who worked at the Home from 1931-1935 before leaving to be married from the TMHOR. During her short married life, she helped out in emergencies and on the death of her husband, took up duties again. 'Her loss leaves a great blank.'

Before the Home was handed over to the NHS in 1948, the committee agreed to give Matron Crowther a pension of £1,500 in the form of an annuity from her 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 4 December 1948. Mrs Aston's services to the TMHOR were also recognised before the Home was passed to the Ministry of Health. At the last annual general meeting presided over by Mrs Cadbury on 25 June 1948, Mrs Aston was thanked for her work for the Home and presented with a Book of Friendship, a cheque for £200 and a diamond brooch. Mrs Aston was 'overcome by the presentations and kind thoughts spoken about her.' No-one else on the management committee was recognised in the same way but in fairness to Violet Aston, her support for the Home was unstinting. She was involved with the TMHOR on a daily basis from 1910 to 1948. She not only kept records of everything but she was the eyes and ears for the rest of the Management Committee. She reported back to the Committee on everything which was a concern, whether it was an issue with the premises, a member of staff or a patient, but she was also involved in having difficult conversations such as on the one with Matron Krausen when she had to be moved on in 1933 and it was she who found and purchased The Grange for the Home when it moved to Erdington, following the Second World War.



We do not know how long Miss Crowther remained at the TMHOR or very much about the staffing of the Home, once it was part of the NHS. Matron Liz Parsons (1976-2005) told me that she (Liz) had trained at Dudley Road Hospital and left there in 1966 when she had children. She had worked on the gynaecology wards and it seems that nurses from these wards often came over to the TMHOR to work here as they had the necessary skills and experience of working with women with gynaecological cancers. Liz was one such registered nurse to whom the TMHOR was recommended and she took on night duties between 1969 and 1971 before returning in 1974 to nurse in the TMHOR before becoming matron in 1976. When she first came to the hospice, she can recall Matron Higgins living upstairs in The Grange. As matron, Liz was in charge of the day-to-day running of the Home. A manager from the Dudley Road Group of Hospitals would come out regularly to meet with her. She described how new initiatives would often start with a discussion and a tray of tea. The Community Nursing Team started in the 1980s with one sister who had specialist knowledge, Ann Howard and grew from there. The day hospice also started in the 1980s. Distressed families were also met with Liz's tray of tea and this was how the Wellbeing Service started. In 1998, Liz was awarded the MBE for services to John Taylor Hospice, the name having changed to John Taylor Hospice from TMHOR in the early 1990s.

Liz Parsons is shown in the picture below of nursing staff which was taken c1990 at the front of the hospice. A recent reunion for former staff (October 2019) has helped us to name many of those in the picture.



*From L to R, Mary Trownan, Leader Home Care Team, Dawn( in red), Sister Margaret Clinical Nurse Specialist, (CNS), Liz Parsons, Matron, Jayne Fidgeon CNS, Vera McNamara Nursing Auxiliary, Kay Butcher (in uniform) ward sister, Dr Sheila Bernie (in sunglasses), Meg Courtney (in uniform), Ward Sister, Betty Pickering Nursing Auxillary(white uniform), Sister Elaine*

A brochure for **John Taylor Hospice** was produced by the Northern Birmingham Community Health NHS Trust. These new trusts came into being following legislation to set them up being passed in 1990. The brochure includes some interesting pictures and information and shows the fountain in the garden where the Living Well Centre is now so it must predate the creation of the new day hospice.

In the patient information section, visiting times are listed as being between 12noon and 8pm. Requests to visit at other times had to be made to the sister or staff nurse on duty. Children could visit at the discretion of the sister. Currently, there are no restrictions on visiting times and relatives can stay overnight with patients or in the overnight stay room.



*Fountain in the former courtyard, where the Living Well Centre is now situated*

In the annual report for the year ending 1932, there is mention of a gentleman of Sparkhill, who remains anonymous, who wanted to help the Home. He cleared a derelict part of the garden, planted it up with shrubs and rose trees. He also took out one of the patients in a bath chair. I believe this gentleman to have been the Home's first volunteer and the only one mentioned in the records! In more recent years, volunteers have played a critical role in the life and work of the hospice and the shops, working in areas such as the day hospice, as drivers, baristas in the café and sales assistants, to name a few roles.

When the TMHOR opened in 1910 a number of honorary surgeons were listed as being associated with it, including:

Miss Annie E Clark

Miss Mary Sturge

Christopher Martin

Frederick Edge

J. Furneaux Jordan

John T Hewetson

We know that Drs Sturge and Martin were very involved in the running of the TMHOR. In 1913 Dr Annie Clark gave £750 to the TMHOR on her retirement, for the building of a mortuary chapel. In 1915, Dr Bernays of Solihull endowed a bed at the Home in memory of his late wife. There is very little information in the records about the involvement of doctors in the care of patients until 1926 when the committee received a letter from Hilda Shufflebotham, secretary to the medical board wrote to Christopher Martin as chair asking for a medical officer to be appointed to the Home who would attend once a week. It was suggested that this could be an individual practitioner or a registrar from the Women's Hospital with the work being carried out by each registrar in turn for a small honorarium. The committee agreed to this suggestion and the first medical officer to be appointed was Mr Kenneth McMillan

with an honorarium of £50 per annum. In 1928, it was recorded at a committee meeting that Mr McMillan had suggested using deep therapy treatment for patients. Mrs Aston was to discuss this suggestion with Mr McMillan and Mr and Mrs Martin. In 1929 Kenneth McMillan retired as medical officer and was replaced by Mrs Bernice Adshead. Very few references are made to doctors subsequently, apart from the resignation of Mr Ganner, a visiting surgeon, in 1936 and the appointment of Selby Tait from 1937 as medical officer. He remained in post until he was called up for active service in 1939. Selby Tait's absence was covered by Philip Ganner for a short while until the move to White Lodge when Dr J R Eden of Cannock took over as medical officer. On the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1945, the management committee noted that the help and advice of honorary medical staff had been greatly missed since the move to Cannock and it was agreed that if one would be willing to visit weekly, an honorarium of 50 guineas would be offered. In 1946 Selby Tait returned to the role of medical officer. Following the Second World War, we do not know what the medical involvement was with the TMHOR except we know from Liz Parsons that Dr Sheila Bernie from the GP practice on Tyburn Road gave medical cover to the hospice. Other GPs have also been involved in providing on call cover for the hospice in recent years and the current Medical Director Dr Deedar Bhomra is also a local GP. In 2019, the hospice appointed a Substantive Consultant in Palliative Medicine Dr Nadia Khan. In recent years, medical cover has been provided by locum consultants Dr Brenda Ward and Dr Liz Freshwater, ably supported by specialty doctors.



*Dr Deedar Bhomra depicted in the Northern Birmingham Community Health NHS Trust brochure for the hospice, 1990s.*

Many other people were involved in supporting the work of the hospice, be they donors and fundraisers or post holders or held honorary posts such as the Bishop of Birmingham who was the first President of the Taylor Memorial Home of Rest. The two vice-presidents were Mrs W A Cadbury who supported the hospice with money and her presence until it became part of the NHS and Mrs J W Taylor, wife of the

late John Taylor. The first Trustees were Christopher Martin, Mr F W Martin and Mr C G Saunders, the latter also being the Treasurer of the Home for many years. The first management committee was made up of Christopher Martin, Chair until his death in 1933, Mrs R Morcom, Mrs J Burman, Lady Smith, Miss Mary Sturge, Miss KE Richmond, Mrs Walker, Mr A D Steel-Maitland and Mr Hugh Aston, husband of the honorary secretary, Violet Aston. Mr and Mrs Aston, in particular were heavily involved in overseeing the management of the Home from day to day before it became part of the NHS in 1948. Others were supportive of the Home, in terms of attending meetings and raising funds. Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland MP took over the role of President of the TMHOR from the Bishop of Birmingham and chaired the annual meetings for many years before being succeeded on his death, by his wife, Lady Steel-Maitland in 1935. She only held the role for 2 years before Mrs Cadbury took up the role in 1937, which she held until the Home transferred in to the NHS. Sir Charles Hyde was also a benefactor who brought his influence to bear. He was responsible for securing the appeal on BBC Radio in 1935 by telling the Regional Appeal Committee that the Taylor Memorial Home was 'one of the most deserving charities in Birmingham.' (Management Committee Minutes 2/4/35). Following the death of Mr Saunders in 1945, Mr W G Grosvenor, Chair of the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund, took on the role of Treasurer for the Home and it was he who expressed confidence in the NHS Act at the Annual Meeting in December 1947, which was reported in the Birmingham Post. His wife became Chair of the Committee, once the Home transferred in to the NHS. The support of fundraisers, companies and philanthropists for the Home before it became part of the NHS is discussed in more detail in the next section.

## **Fundraising and Finance**

Even in the first annual report for 1910, there is an appeal for funds. The accounts showed the Home to be £7 in credit but Christopher Martin argued that 'a larger income was necessary whether they remained in the present premises (Park Road at that time) or had a larger Home.' The first annual report also lists the gifts that had been given to the home including:

A book of poems	Mrs Taylor
Old linen	Lady Smith
Flowers	Miss Lloyd
Picture	Miss Sturge
Water bed and reading desk	Mrs Martin
Flowers, fruit and veg	Mr Reid

These early gifts were from people with a very close association with the Home – Mrs Taylor being widow of John Taylor and vice-president Mrs Martin, wife of Christopher Martin, Chair of the Committee. Mr Reid was probably Matron Reid's brother. Life governors are also listed in the first report – these were donors who had given £10 10s or more in one year and they include A D Steel-Maitland, R B Bird of the Bird's Custard Family, Mrs W A Cadbury and members of the well-known Birmingham Quaker family the Gibbins. There were also subscribers who were regular givers of money to the Home and there were individuals and companies including the brewers Ansells and Mitchell and Butlers who gave on-off donations to the Home. Money was also raised for the Home in the early days through collections at events and meetings.

At the very first meeting of the management committee held at the Outpatient Department of the Women's Hospital on 4 May 1910 Mary Sturge tried to bring a resolution that money should not be raised by entertainments unless approved by the committee but in the end she was forced to withdraw the resolution as it did not have the support of the committee. It is not clear whether Mary Sturge did not approve of entertainment per se or disapproved of raising money through entertainment but in any event, concerts and dramatic performances were a useful source of fundraising for the Home and many such events were held to raise money. One long-term supporter of the Home, George Hoseason, arranged events of this kind in Tanworth-in-Arden to raise money for the TMHOR, almost until his death in 1945, aged 92. An undated newspaper cutting reports a dance in aid of the TMHOR organised by the Ladies Guild at the Grand Hotel in Birmingham which raised £73.3s.6d. As well as entertainment outside of the Home, there were dramatic performances within it too; two members of staff gave a theatrical performance for patients on Christmas Day in 1916. (Annual report for year ended 31/12/1916). This tradition was still alive and well in 1989 when staff put on a Christmas show of the pantomime Cinderella for patients, (The News 22 December 1989).

In the 1933 annual report, other diversions for the patients are also mentioned. These included embroidery classes which were held in the summer months and a £5 donation paid for a bird table, bird bath and reading lamps.

Individuals and groups raised money for the Home in other ways as well such as whist drives, afternoon teas and sales of work. The Pound Days mentioned above which were started by Miss Reid but which continued after retirement, into the 1930s, were significant fundraisers but also important 'open days' as such because they gave members of the public direct contact with the Home. The gifts in kind were also significant and included flowers, fruit and vegetables, linen and other household goods. The first official open day as such ever held at the Home was in September 1912. It was known as an 'At Home Day' and the whole purpose of it was get people interested in the work of the TMHOR. In the last 2-3 years, the hospice has held some successful open days which have been well attended by

members of the public as well as representatives from interested groups and organisations and they have helped to raise the profile of the organisation.

Trusts and grant-making bodies were and still are today an important source of funding. The Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund and the Water Orton League, a branch of the Women's Hospital League, were particularly supportive of the THMOR giving grants and monies year after year and promoting the work of the Home. Mrs Cook, treasurer from the Water Orton League worked to raise funds for the Home for over twenty years. Other trusts also gave grants including the Brinsley Bequest and the John Feeney Trust, Mrs Feeney being a life governor. The John Feeney Trust endowed a bed with a grant of £1,000 in 1916. Other organisations also endowed a bed or beds at the Home including the Women's League of Help who raised £890 over 5 years to endow a bed named "Remembrance" in 1938. Individuals also endowed beds, often in memory of a loved one. In 1915 Dr Bernays of Solihull endowed a bed in memory of his wife.



*Newspaper coverage of the endowment of a bed at the TMHOR by the Women's League of Help. The nurse shown in the picture is Matron Crowther (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

From the earliest days of the Home, legacies were an important source of income, and by the start of the Second World War, the amount of legacy income was substantial. This was probably as a result of the hard work of the members of the management committee and staff in the Home to win over supporters as subscribers (regular givers to the Home) and to persuade them to leave money in their wills. Legacy monies did also come from patients and their family members but many of the legacies mentioned in the records related to long-term supporters of the Home, such as Sir Charles Hyde who left £1,000 in 1943. Some monies were given with

conditions attached such as the Mrs Williams Fund mentioned in the Premises section above for the extension of the verandah at Sparkhill but which in the end paid for the verandah at The Grange.

In the 1944 annual report, a very touching story is recounted:

'Many letters of gratitude are received from relatives of the patients. One to Matron from a husband said, "I am enclosing a cheque for ten pounds as a donation to the Home which I trust you will accept. Please do not think I am trying to pay for services rendered. I have the sense to know that money could never pay for such noble service as you people are doing."

Although income levels had improved by the Second World War, the TMHOR recorded a deficit nearly every year in its first 30 years. At times of major building works, eg the building of the Mary Sturge Memorial Wing, formal appeals were launched and to mark the silver anniversary of the Home in 1935, there was the BBC radio appeal for funds. However, the anxiety of the committee about the day-to-day finances can be seen in the appeals members make year after year at the annual meetings and through the annual reports. By 1916, the Home was in deficit to the tune of over £500 and the annual report for the year states that the committee felt it should not close the Home or reduce the number of beds: 'Now that the Home and the kindness received there has become better known to the suffering poor, there is an ever-increasing demand for admission. The committee therefore earnestly appeal to the generosity of the public for the increased financial support which they so greatly need.' In the late 1930s, the following formal appeal for subscribers and to endow beds was made through the annual report (see picture below).



The Taylor Memorial Home of Rest,  
SHOWELL GREEN LANE,  
SPARKHILL, BIRMINGHAM.

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HOW TO HELP THE HOME:

## ENDOW A BED IN THE HOME

A LEGACY OR GIFT OF £1,250  
ENDOWS A BED.

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WHY NOT  
BECOME A SUBSCRIBER?

21

*Appeal in 1938 Annual Report for subscribers to the Home (reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham)*

John Taylor Hospice/Taylor Memorial Home has long held special funds to pay for treats or sometimes even essentials for patients. The League of Friends which was in existence for 45 years raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for the hospice and gave generously to patients needing a new washing machine or cooker for example or a trip to the pantomime for day hospice patients at Christmas. This was in addition to the many other ways it supported the work of the hospice including the funding of the new wing referred to in the premises section above. The Ian Murray Memorial Fund has also provided special treats in the form of outings and short breaks or has covered the cost of transport for patients and their families.

In 1930 Sir Alfred Herbert, an industrialist from Coventry set up the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund in honour of his late wife. The income from 6% of shares in Alfred Herbert Ltd was to be used for extra comforts and small luxuries for patients including flowers, fruit, 'special articles of diet' for patients with specific dietary needs and drives out for patients well enough to enjoy them. (minutes of the management committee meeting 4/7/1930). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund worked well; issues only arose around it when the Taylor Memorial Home was gifted in to the NHS in 1948. It became the subject of several years of legal wrangling with the Department of Health, with Sir Alfred and members of the original management committee arguing that the fund had been set up expressly for the benefit of the Home's patients and the Department of Health claiming that the monies should go in to a more general pot to benefit patients in the overall Dudley Road Group of Hospitals. A large file of all the comings and goings is held in the National Archive. I have attempted to sift through it to pull out the main facts and points which arose in the 'battle' for the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund. It was certainly Violet Aston's last fight for the Home and it demonstrates how much importance she and others attached to making every moment matter for the patients and to ensuring the very best for them.

### **The Lady Herbert Memorial Fund 1948-1954**

When the assets of the TMHOR were handed over to the Ministry of Health in July 1948, the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund was placed into the hands of four trustees to administer it: Mr V W Grosvenor, treasurer on the management committee, Mr Cyril Martin, Mr F W G Jackson and Mr Wilfrid Matthews, a solicitor and legal advisor to Sir Alfred Herbert. At that time the fund amounted to £206.6s.4d. Even before the Home was handed over, Violet Aston's correspondence with the Ministry of Health shows that she was asked to confirm that the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund was for the benefit of patients whilst they were in hospital and not after discharge which she did in a somewhat terse letter on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1948:

'Yes. The Lady Herbert Fund is used entirely for the patients while in the Home. Death is usually their discharge.'

Following the transfer, when the Ministry of Health was looking to unpick all the stocks and shares which had been given with the properties to the NHS, questions were raised about whether the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund shares had been sold or redeemed. The records in the National Archive between the Dudley Road Hospitals Management Committee and the Ministry of Health in 1952 show that there was very little understanding of the nature or extent of the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund and in notes sent to the Ministry of Health by the Dudley Road Group of Hospitals (28/5/52) it states 'it has not been possible to contact the late Honorary Secretary, Mrs Aston, who is too ill to be approached.' The notes go on to imply that the

committee believes the fund is on deposit with Lloyds Bank in New Street, Birmingham. In correspondence, later in the year from T H Waterhouse, Solicitor to the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board, it is confirmed that the shares are deposited with Lloyds Bank. The Solicitor also states it was never the intention that the fund should be used for general expenses and he goes on to say:

'If it is to be held that this fund constitutes an endowment within the meaning of Section 7 (10) of the NHS Act 1946, and the minister takes this fund into the National Hospital Endowments Fund it will have the effect of defeating the express wishes of Sir Alfred Herbert in making this gift and of depriving this hospital which, as you are no doubt aware, has only recently started to function again and is now more than ever in need of funds for the provision of amenities for incurable cases.'

He goes on to suggest that the funds should be transferred to the Hospital Management Committee to administer. This suggestion was firmly rebuffed by Mr G S Taylerson at the Ministry of Health and he asked for the funds including the income from the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund to be forwarded to the Department of Health. The Dudley Road Group of Hospitals duly sent a cheque to the Department of Health early in 1953 for the remaining income from dividends in the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund. This amounted to £338.7s.2d. Lloyds Bank sent the share certificate for £1,000 worth of shares but the name on the share certificate had not been changed to the Minister for Health because Sir Alfred Herbert still had concerns about how the funds would be allocated and was far from convinced that they would be used for their original purpose. Throughout 1953, there was considerable correspondence between Mr Taylerson at the Department for Health and Wilfrid Matthews, one-time committee member for the TMHOR and legal representative for Sir Alfred Herbert, arguing over the provisions of the NHS Act, in particular section 7 (7). Legally, it is quite complex, but essentially, the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund was classed as an endowment which under the NHS Act became part of the Hospital Endowments Fund when the NHS was formed. This fund was then to be apportioned to Regional Hospital Boards and Hospital Management Committees and income derived from it was to be used for the provision of amenities for patients. In short, this would give the Hospital Management Committee at Dudley Road the power to distribute the funds but under section 7(7) of the Act, they only had to 'secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the objects of the endowment' were met and in reality were not obliged to apply an equal amount to the income of a former fund, ie 'the sum given to amenities for patients could be greater or less than the original endowment.' Mr Matthews would not countenance that the money given to patients at the TMHOR would be less than that held originally by the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund and legal argument continued well in to 1953. Something of a stalemate ensued which was only broken by a meeting between Sir Alfred Herbert himself and Mr Nicol, the legal representative for the Department of Health on 8 March 1954. By this stage, Sir Alfred was 87 and he was anxious to resolve the situation 'before the gentleman with the scythe intervenes.' (letter to Mr Nicol, 9 March 1954). The letter he wrote the day after his visit shown in the picture below

is not only quite self-deprecating as Sir Alfred contemplates his impending death, but is also moving, because he is arguing the case for the Taylor Memorial Home as a home for the dying rather than a hospital and he is still fighting for the money in the memorial fund to go directly to the patients. At the meeting, it was agreed that the Ministry of Health would seek to secure an assurance from the Hospital Management Committee at Dudley Road that an income stream of the equivalent of £60 per annum from the shares would be made available for the original purposes of the fund as set out in the original deed in 1930. If the assurance was obtained Sir Alfred agreed that he would allow the name to be changed on the Share Certificate to the Minister of Health. The assurance was obtained and by the autumn of 1954 the matter was resolved, but not without an amusing sting in the tale! A sum of £49.10s 0d remained in the Lloyds bank account for the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund and eventually a cheque was sent for this amount on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1954 by Wilfrid Matthews to the Department of Health, with a note explaining that the delay in sending the cheque had been caused by the fact that 'it had to be sent to India for signature by one of the trustees and we only got it back this morning.'

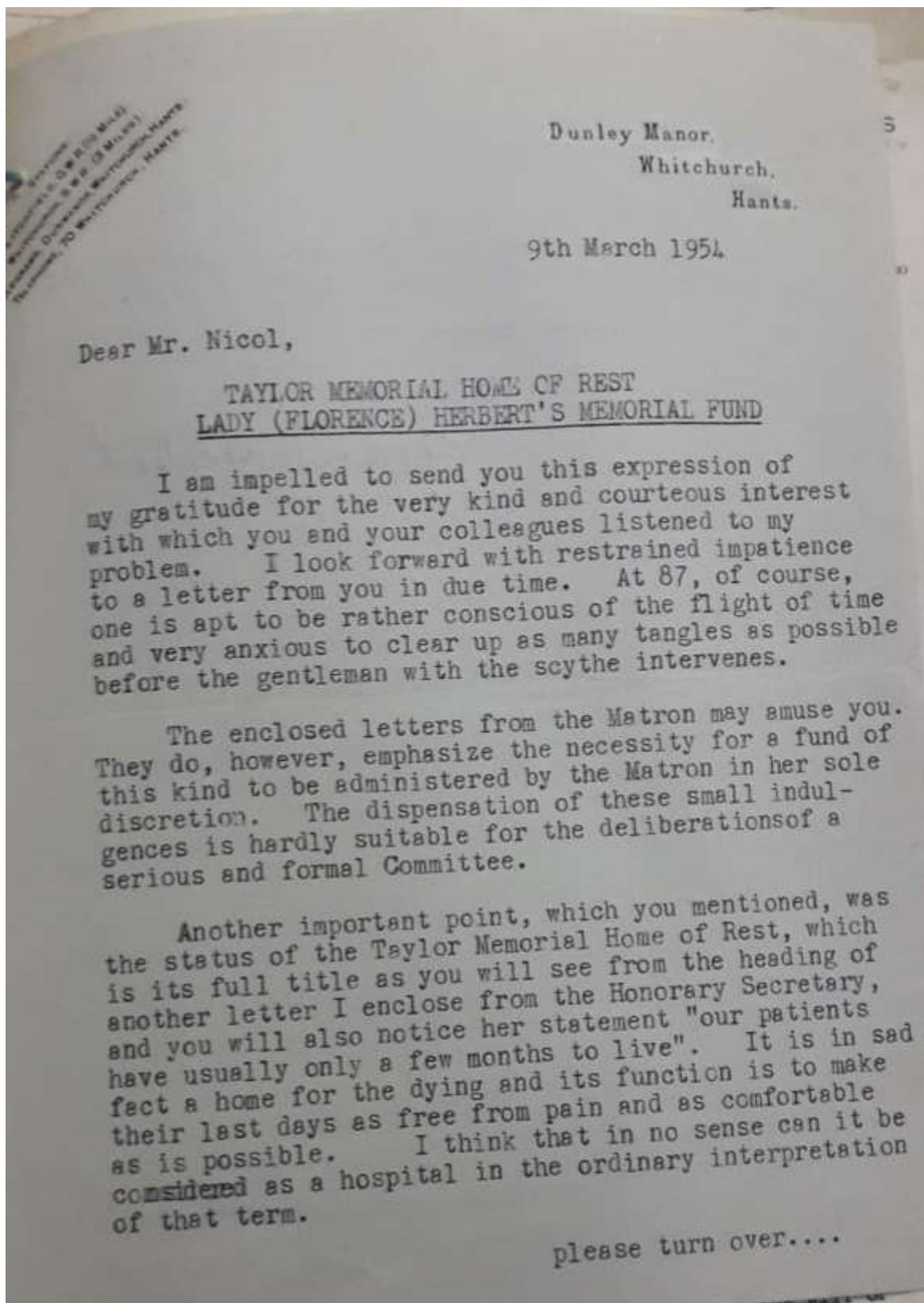
Mr Taylerson did at least have the courtesy to write to Sir Alfred Herbert to thank him for his help in bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

As a footnote to this whole saga, we do know that Violet Aston was very concerned about the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund and the fact that following the transfer of the Home in to the NHS, the patients were not getting the benefit of drives out in the summer weather. There is a rough copy of a letter she penned to Mr W G Grosvenor, the chair of the new committee, in the records, in which she sets out the history of the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund from the beginning in the hope that 'you can do something about it.' She also states that she is leaving Birmingham shortly and is very upset about the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund. There is also a rough draft of a letter to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham in which Violet Aston states:

'I know the Taylor Memorial Home has cost a lot of money to reconstruct but I sent to Whitehall according to instructions in July 1948 gilt-edged securities then worth £70,000 and the deeds of the freehold houses, one at Cannock worth £5,000 and The Grange at Erdington for which the plans had been made and the work begun. I am leaving Birmingham at the end of August where I have always lived and I do want someone to understand and know about The Taylor Memorial Home and to be really interested in it before I go.'

Unfortunately, neither of Mrs Aston's letters are dated but must have been written at about the same time. There is a letter in the Birmingham Archives from March 1953 in which Wilfrid Mathews seeks to assure Violet Aston that he is working with the Hospital Management Committee to get funds from the Lady Herbert Memorial Fund used for the purposes set out in the original trust deed from 1930. It would perhaps follow that after her illness in 1952, Mrs Aston moved away from Birmingham the following year as her children had grown up and were no longer living near to her. It would be interesting to know whether she ever sent the letter to the Lord Mayor

of Birmingham, but whether she did or not, we can conclude that for as long as she was able, Violet Aston sought to promote the interests of the TMHOR and its patients and was committed wholeheartedly to it.



Letter from Sir Alfred Herbert from the TMHOR file, held at the National Archive

## **Brand, Media and Fundraising in the modern era**

When the TMHOR went into the NHS, fundraising continued but not in the more structured way it does today. Liz Parsons, former matron, told me that families would bring in donations for the Home including monies collected at funerals in memory of loved ones and she would write the 'thank you' letters. The establishment of the League of Friends about forty years ago was a great support to Liz in helping to raise funds and channel the monies given to the hospice.

The hospice did not have a logo or recognisable branding until it left the NHS and became a community interest company. The appeal for volunteers and fundraisers in the North Birmingham Community NHS Trust brochure shown below illustrates this rather well but, as nearly all the funding of services was provided by the NHS, it was not deemed necessary to have such a high profile.

*WOULD YOU Help to Care?*

*Complete this form  
and send to*

The John Taylor Hospice  
76 Grange Road, Erdington  
Birmingham B24 0DF  
Tel: 0121-373 5526

Since John Taylor Hospice came out of the NHS in 2011, it has adopted its distinctive gift tag branding and multi-coloured dots and its strapline 'every moment matters'

features prominently. It is used on leaflets, headed paper and in advertising, from the side of a taxi cab to billboards and posters across the city. Currently, about 80% of the hospice's services are funded by the NHS which leaves 20% to be found through fundraising. In May 2017 the hospice began trading through its first charity shop in Erdington High Street and since then, three further shops have opened in Wylde Green, Castle Bromwich and Brownhills – with more planned. The shops have helped to raise the profile of the hospice within the communities we serve as well raising much-needed funds.

In recent years, an exciting events programme has been developed with abseiling and mountain climbing for the more adventurous and cake sales and quizzes for those who prefer less physically demanding activities. There is also work underway to attract more corporate sponsorship and support and to encourage gifts in wills and in memoriam giving. Community fundraising is also a key element of the fundraising strategy.

### **The Home in the Wars**

There can be no doubt that the First and the Second World Wars had a significant impact upon the Taylor Memorial Home of Rest but in very different ways.

At the start of the First World War, the Home had only been open 4 years and was still getting itself established. At a meeting of the management committee on 15 September 1914, it was reported that the deficit was likely to be between £250 and £300 for the year. The committee agreed to put a short advertisement in the Birmingham Press weekly for the Home but it was decided that because of the war, 'it would be useless to issue an appeal for funds at the present time.' The annual report for 1914 also mentions that the outbreak of war has had a significant impact upon fundraising:

'Early in the year arrangements had been made for a series of entertainments for the double purpose of making the home more widely known and providing additional funds, but when the war broke out these arrangements were cancelled, and all hope of raising funds in this way has had to be abandoned for the present.'

In the annual report for 1915, the increased cost of food, drugs etc is given as the reason for it being a difficult year. This situation worsened in 1916 and the annual report for the year cites the overall debt for the Home as being £517 19s 6d and a great source of anxiety. The 'price of surgical dressings is now almost prohibitive' and an appeal was put out for old sheets, handkerchiefs etc for dressings.

By 1918 the deficit had increased to over £900 and the Women's Hospital gave the TMHOR some money to cover it.

Staffing in the First World War was not such an issue as it was in the Second World War, although as mentioned earlier, the Women's Hospital was struggling for staff and asked the TMHOR to start recruiting their own nurses in 1917.

As the Second World War loomed on the horizon in 1939, the Management Committee met in May of that year. A shortage of domestic help was noted and this only became worse when war came. The chair of the committee announced that sandbags would be used in case of war but it would not be possible to move patients, owing to extreme illness and nursing staff would have to remain on duty with them in the event of air raids. The annual report for 1939 notes that there were been fewer admissions in the year as the committee thought it advisable to close the top floor of the Home at the start of the war, 'the patients being too ill and helpless to be removed from there in the event of air raids.' The number of beds was reduced from 20 to 12 as a result. The cellar was strengthened to make a shelter for off duty members of staff to use. The committee had also decided that owing to war conditions, nothing proactive could be done to raise funds but any received would form the nucleus of an improvement fund for the Home. As alluded to above, money was less of an issue in the Second World War because the hard work of the early years had paid off in terms of legacy income and investment monies came good.

In 1940, when the air raids became more intense and bombs began to drop in the grounds of Showell Green House, the Home closed just before Christmas and re-opened in June 1941 at White Lodge in Cannock. In the 1940 annual report the steadfastness of the nursing staff was noted:

'The committee feel they must express their appreciation of the courage and fortitude displayed by the Matron and Staff, who during intense air raids nobly stood to their posts, by the beds of patients far too ill to be removed.'

The Revd A T Jenkins was also thanked for his regular visits to the Home during air raids. His presence was a source of great comfort both to patients and staff.

In 1941, the annual report notes the alterations which had been made at White Lodge which were paid for by legacies. Whilst the work was going on, some patients were transferred to the Women's Hospital Annexe at Hammerwich. The building works interestingly included an overnight stay room for patients' relatives. This was evidently a good idea as relatives would be travelling a fair distance out from Birmingham and other areas of the Midlands to visit patients and black out conditions were not helpful in terms of transport but nevertheless, this was quite an innovation for the time.

The management committee thanked neighbours in Cannock for their kindness in the 1941 annual report, including Mr and Mrs Taylor who had lent a bedroom in their house for the use of staff and other neighbours who had brought garden produce, met staff at the bus terminus and brought them home during the black-out. The St John Ambulance was also thanked for helping out at weekends.

In 1942 the domestic staffing situation became more acute and resulted in the matron and staff having to do the gardening, cooking and cleaning as has already been mentioned. However, the running costs at Cannock were less than at Sparkhill



and this enabled the management committee to save money and to start to build up a fund, for what they believed would be the return to Sparkhill.

In 1942/43 the home was almost continuously full at Cannock and often there was a waiting list. In 1944 the staffing shortages were acknowledged in the annual report:

'In spite of adverse conditions and shortage of staff the work of the Home has gone on quietly and efficiently. Too much praise cannot be given to matron and sister who have at times been left almost alone to cope with great difficulties. Whatever happens they feel the patients must have proper attention and must not suffer. They will not leave their posts and so cannot get the rest and relaxation they need. So long as the Taylor Home has this spirit animating those at its head so long will it go on successfully as it has in the past.' As we know, between 1945 and 1948, the nursing staff shortages worsened to such an extent that the TMHOR could only take convalescent patients or had to close for periods.

In the 1945 annual report there is no shying away from the 'great blow' the committee had received from the Women's Hospital notice to quit Showell Green House. Plans to improve the Home at Sparkhill had been made and approved by the Ministry of Health. 'This couldn't have happened at a more difficult time with houses so scarce, Government restrictions so drastic and labour shortage so acute.' In spite of such a bleak situation and the management committee finding it hard to start again, a new Home was purchased in Erdington – The Grange. At the last annual meeting on 25 June 1948, Violet Aston 'hoped that the Taylor Memorial Home would rise again.' At the same meeting, Mrs Cadbury said:

'I do not wish the meeting to be a sad or funeral affair but rather one for rejoicing that so much beneficent work has been accomplished. We are all familiar with the establishment of the Home and we remember with gratitude the help given by Dr Sturge, Mr Martin and many others in the past, and we know that the spirit with which they worked will carry on with the new authorities.' And it did.

## **Conclusion**

It is impossible to quantify that spirit referred to by Mrs Cadbury at the last Annual General Meeting of the TMHOR in 1948 and in the annual report of 1944 but it has permeated the last 110 years. I think the nearest we can get to describing it is as an unerring commitment to ensuring the very best care for patients at the end of their lives and their families and to making every moment matter for them. It could be said, quite rightly, that other hospices provide something similar and this is true but John Taylor Hospice has been caring for the people of Birmingham at the end of their lives for longer than any other. It has also maintained its original ethos of providing care for patients free at the point of need and still has a heart for those who are struggling economically. Even though it no longer serves the south of Birmingham, John Taylor Hospice's reach is throughout the north, west, east and some central parts of the city and its catchment area includes some of the most

deprived areas in the country. The hospice has also retained its non-denominational status and cares for all adults, (aged over 18), regardless of religion or background.

On 12 July 1940 an article appeared in a local paper, (unfortunately we do not have the name of the newspaper), entitled 'The Noble work of the Taylor Memorial Home of Rest. A Haven for the suffering.' The title seems rather archaic but much of the content of the article is rather touching and sums up much that can be said about John Taylor Hospice then and now. The writer states:

'I was very wide of the mark in expecting to find gloom and despair at the Taylor Memorial Home. I found that not only is "Home of Rest" an apt name for it, but that there is a real cheerfulness mingled with the peace and calmness which reign there.'

She goes on to describe the homely feel, the bedding in pastel shades, the flowers from the garden which adorn the rooms and the special fund (Lady Herbert Memorial Fund) which provides treats for the patients. She asked the matron (Miss Crowther) about the nature of the work with the dying and matron responded:

'We know that the patients must die, so the least we can do is to enable them to die in comfort.'

This statement may seem a bit stark to us but the writer felt moved by it and by the pleasant way in which the work is carried out. She also highlights the age of the patients, many being in their 40s and some in their 20s or 30s which she was shocked by, having expected the patients to be older.

She also noted 'People of any part of the country, of any income and religion are admitted, but preference is given to patients of Birmingham itself.'

All this description we recognise today as being hallmarks of John Taylor Hospice. It is not necessarily the big investments in buildings or modern medicine which have made the greatest difference to patients and their families, although undoubtedly, they are significant, but it seems that the homely ambience, the small treats and the compassionate care, which have been offered and continue to be given freely, either within the hospice building or out in the community, have shaped the organisation throughout its long history. John Taylor himself could not have hoped for a better tribute.

Kate Ellis