

Te Rangī

For 51 years Te Rangī Hospital served Nelson women and their babies with 'home away from home care, including the best pumpkin scones in the district'.

Half a Century of Care

Te Rangī Hospital, once sited on Collingwood Street with a garden extending to Halstead Street, was the place where many Nelsonians drew their first breath.

Its reputation – of kind and competent nurses; a private and beautiful garden; homely decor and central location – made it a popular choice for women from all over the district to have their babies. So much in demand that bookings were required, especially during the post World War Two 'baby boom' when Nelson Hospital found Te Rangī very handy to take the 'overflow'.

Opened in 1915, Te Rangī started as a private surgical and maternity hospital. It occupied a private residence and surgery originally built by Dr Henry Wright who came from South Africa and began his practice in 1907. Te Rangī was started by a group of doctors, Phillip Andrew, Stanley Lucas, Francis Bett and William Johnston. Nurse Ellen Gosling, who had been matron at Nelson hospital until 1913, also owned a share and was believed to be the first Te Rangī Matron.

In 1941 the Te Rangī Trust was formed. The Trust reserved their Manuka Street Hospital for surgical cases and dedicated Te Rangī to specialist maternity care.

In 1956 Te Rangī was leased to the Nelson Hospital Board. A decade later, in line with the closure of small units in favour of general hospital care, Te Rangī closed.



NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM GEOFFREY WOOD COLLECTION L6811 f7

LEFT Closing day at Te Rangī 1966, in the garden between the two wings of the complex. Sister Rena Hall sits centre front with Sister Majorie Daniell behind her at right. Back row doctors include Dr Brian Neill, Dr Lucas, Dr Hardie-Boys, Dr Ken Galloway and Dr Hudson. Other staff includes Mary Carpenter, Jessie Snow, Pearl Hosking, Gladys Kipling, Sylvia Bockman, and Sister Bush.

Changing Practices

The history of Te Rangi – from private ownership in the 1920s, through public hospital lease in the 1950s, to closure in 1966 – reflects changing practices in midwifery.

Before the 1920s most babies were born at home, marae or private hospital, usually with the assistance of a midwife or family doctor. The Social Security Act of 1925 sought to address high infant mortality, and by 1939 there was free maternity care at public hospitals.

In 1926, 98 of the 236 total births in Nelson occurred in hospitals, and 65 of these were at Te Rangi. By 1940, 300 of the 344 total births in Nelson were in hospital.

In 1904 midwives needed to be registered. In 1907 Mabel Atkinson was the only Class A midwife in Nelson denoting her full hospital training. Class B midwives were simply certified by doctors as being of 'good character' and to have assisted and observed births for three years.

More law changes in the 1970s resulted in all registered midwives needing a 3 year specialised degree; a closure of cottage hospitals like Te Rangi; and increasing specialisation around maternity care.



The Te Rangi Service

Te Rangi Maternity Hospital had 18 beds, a matron in charge of registered midwives and nurse aides, a resident cook, and doctors on call. Nurses on early morning duty stayed the night in the nurses home which had one wall in New Street, but no access. Staff entered from Collingwood Street through the kitchen, where one did not linger or aides would be given extra work to do. Margaret Major of Nelson; recalls Te Rangi in the 1950s:

"I booked in for each birth as soon as I knew I was pregnant. I had a referral letter from my doctor. Matron interviewed me in her office, off Collingwood Street, and gave me a booklet called 'Natural Childbirth'.

If Te Rangi was full at the time of labour, you were sent to Nelson hospital. I was lucky and gave birth to all our five children at Te Rangi.

There was a 'prep' room where you got ready for the birth, with a board across the bath. The delivery theatre was across the corridor. Following the birth we were bound around the tummy and were not allowed out of bed for a week. The nurses looked after the babies and brought them to us, wrapped up, at four-hourly feeding time. After one week we could get up. We spent much time sitting and chatting in the sunny, glassed-in porch. The day before we went home we were taught how to unwrap, bathe and wrap baby again. The morning of departure we got up after having breakfast, bathed baby, got ourselves ready, and went home."

BELOW & BELOW RIGHT Nurses, nurse aides and new mothers pose in the late 1930s on the Te Rangi ward veranda, for an unknown photographer. Jenny Eade of Nelson provided these photographs from her family album. Jenny's mother Zena Wells was a nurse aide at Te Rangi and can be seen on the left in the picture below and front left in the nurses group. Zena married Ronald Harisman in 1940 and gave birth at Te Rangi to Jenny in 1943 and Lynette in 1944. Jenny's first daughter was born at Te Rangi in 1964, with husband in attendance. By the time her second was born in 1966 Te Rangi had closed.

RIGHT Nurse aide Zena Wells holding a Te Rangi baby, late 1930s.

BELOW In the 1950s and 1960s Nelson Hospital Board provided a list of requirements for mothers attending Te Rangi. Judging by the stories provided by Te Rangi mothers, many did not have time to telephone first.



JENNY EADE



JENNY EADE

JENNY EADE

Recollections

The men were not encouraged to be at the birth, as they are now. Visiting hours were strict at first but became much more relaxed in the 1950s. Te Rangi was great for the families of inner city residents. Roya Delorenzo, who lived in The Wood, was able to go home for Christmas dinner during one confinement. Many women walked or rode their bicycles to Te Rangi, especially in the early days when owning a car was not common.

Te Rangi Maternity Hospital also managed deliveries of single mothers who were kept segregated from married mothers. The single mothers often kept their pregnancy secret and told their families, for example, that they were apple picking in Nelson. Their babies were then adopted. Sometimes these babies were adopted by married women whose own babies had died at birth, at the time of the single mother's confinement.

Jesse Chamberlain, who was an aide from 1933-34, remembered frail new born babies being kept in baskets on the top of the coal range. They were kept constantly warm, under the supervision of Matron, to help them survive. Jesse recalled a number of deaths of mothers and children. In the 1950s, 20 in 1000 babies in New Zealand were stillborn or died in their first 10 days.

Hygiene was very important and those in charge tended to be very strict. If staff were ill they could not work and Moana Totoe recalls sweeping the floor in 1958-60 with tea leaves which acted as an excellent cleaning aid.

THANK YOU TO THE MANY NELSON WOMEN WHO ATTENDED A SESSION AT NELSON PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1 DECEMBER 2014, TO RECALL THEIR EXPERIENCES OF TE RANGI. FOR MORE STORIES VISIT THE PROW WEBSITE www.theprow.org.nz



KAREN WOOD

LEFT Ellen Wood holding baby Karen who arrived 6 June 1946 at Te Rangi, one of the post War 'baby boomers' born on the second anniversary of D-Day. Ellen's husband, the well-known Nelson photographer Geoffrey C. Wood captured the image of proud mother and highly regarded Sister Janet Leslie.

BELOW Nurse Anne Leahy on her verandah with a young patient. In the 1930s, Anne housed the Te Rangi surgical and maternity patient overflow at her home across the road on Collingwood Street. Her front room was converted to a maternity suite. Anne was 70 when she reluctantly gave up being a midwife.

BELOW RIGHT Before 1907 midwives did not require registration. The newspaper column from the Colonist 8 May 1907 illustrates the changeover period.



NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM TYREE STUDIO 97343

Midwives Registered.—The following midwives have been Gazetted: Class A (holding certificate) Miss A. M. Atkinson, Nelson. Class B (three years practice, and of good character) Mrs Beatrice Bradley, Lower Moutere; Mrs Christina Cederman, Riwaka; Mrs Marion Dyer, Collingwood; Mrs Charlotte Eginton, Motueka; Mrs Olive Hindley, Nelson; Mrs W. Liley, Nelson; Mrs Minnie McCusker, Richmond; Mrs Dorothea Rose, Upper Moutere; Mrs Jane Thorn, Motueka; Mrs Emma Wiggzell, Collingwood; Mrs Sophia M. Wilkens, Nelson. Judging from the foregoing list there are a number of growing localities in the Nelson district without a registered mid-wife.



ANDREA VINCENT

RIGHT Midwife May Allport's kit 1940s. Today's midwifery equipment no longer fits into one suitcase but takes up the whole boot of a car.



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ABOVE Mrs Cathy Rosenweig holds Joanne, the last baby to be born at Te Rangi, as featured in the Nelson Photo News April 30 1966.

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 For information on Nelson's heritage walks, sites and events visit www.nelson.govt.nz

