

<i>Month & Year of Topic</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Written & Spoken Presenters</i>
May 1999	Medical Services in Oatley Dr. Prott	June Bennett Alec Leach George Kendall

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OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP

MEETING DATE: 28th May 1999

TOPIC: Medical Services
in Oatley

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ORIGINALS

Early Health Services in Oatley

In 1922 my mother opened a maternity cottage hospital. The address was 10A Rosa Street, now changed to 18 Rosa St. The weatherboard & fibre home is still standing. The hospital was registered as a three bed hospital and had to be inspected to be registered and I remember had regular inspections to maintain standards. The first baby delivered there in 1922 was Edna Clark (now Fryer) and the last Mrs Stranys daughter in 19... Babies were often born at home and not always with the doctor arriving. My mother's nursing bag was a gladstone bag and equiped with surgical instruments which she carried on foot to many deliveries. She had no other transport but often the husband of the mother-to-be would carry her bag while she carried a hurricane lamp as there were no lighting in the back streets. Babies attended at home deliveries were charged thirty shillings which also meant three or more visits to the home. For babies born in the hospital the charge was four guineas for a ten day stay (no early discharge) with all meals, laundry baby care etc. Mothers did not get up from delivery for days and the only doctors were Dr. Webb who came from Montdale and later Dr Pratt who set up practice in 1925 in Oatley West. My earliest memories of motor cars was Dr Webb's car as only very rich people had cars in early days of Oatley. Nurse Newcombe had a private hospital, too, in

Oatley West and it was opposite the railway line. If I have the right memory it was a brick home with a front verandah but I have very little information on Nurse Newcombe. Mrs. Nelly Cow came to Oatley and had been an army nurse but I don't think she was nursed in Oatley and certainly didn't have a private hospital. My mother had trained at the Royal Hospital Paddington and Oatley was quite a change from delivering babies in the city. ~~and when~~ Doctor's charges for their services were ten shillings and sixpence when one went to a doctor. As transport was limited and wages were small only very ill people could afford doctor's services. Oatley must have been a very healthy place as I don't remember ever going to a doctor except for having my tonsils and adenoids out by Dr Webb at home. However Lodge had a scheme to help medical bills where families paid 6d. per week to be put on the doctor's list. Lodge at Mortdale was a Rubabite lodge with a health fund for tea-total membership.

The first chemist in Oatley seems to be Mr Alan Dunsmore in 1927 and his shop was on the corner of Frederick St and Oatley Avenue. It was the only chemist shop of course and was there two years before he married so he was quite young. In 1938, according to his relative Mrs Sean Phillips, he built this new chemist shop in Frederick Street which was vacant land in those days. Babies could be weighed

these which must have been a great help to the mothers of Oatley as the nearest baby health clinic was at Mostdale where mothers had to push prams over a dreadful road near the train sheds to be attended to.

Our first dentist was Mr. De Saxe who occupied the shop where Mr. Dunsmore had been i.e. corner of Frederick and Oatley Avenue. This was probably 1938-39 (certainly before the start of World War II). I remember it seemed to me to be great progress for Oatley to have a dentist as I had always gone to Harsterville to the dentist

28.5.1999

MY DOCTOR

DOCTOR PROTT

Oatley Heritage Group Meeting Friday 28th May 1999

Presented by Alec Leach.

My association with Doctor Prott began within about a quarter of an hour of my being born and lasted for over thirty years. During that time he treated me for a variety of ailments and foreign body removals.

Mr. George Kendall Senior had already transported Mum to the care of Nurse Lopherd. Her nursing home "Adina Private Hospital" was in Princes Street, Mortdale. Apparently there was a running professional battle between her and Doctor Prott. Nurse Lopherd who didn't consider that I was about to hit the world yelling and screaming so soon, wouldn't listen to Mum. Oh boy, Doctor Prott tore strips off her when he arrived, hence the quarter of an hour delay before we met.

His practice was situated on the corner of Woronora and Wonoona Parades, the address being 47 Woronora Parade Oatley. He had not long moved from further down Wonoona Parade.

For the treatment of pneumonia when I was two and six, he used the old poultice trick and I was kept in bed for weeks. By the time it hit me again at seventeen, it was a couple of jabs of penicillin and back to work in two weeks.

When I was approximately eight years old, I received a piece of hot coke in my eye. I was sitting close to the esky type fire when Mum was loading the coke into it. A spark entered my eye. Next morning I was taken over to Doctor Prott, he sat me down, inserted drops in my eye and attempted to remove the foreign body. I had other ideas and began to cry, so as quick as a wink he smacked me across the face, telling me in no uncertain manner that I had washed the drops out and he would have to start again. Mum added her little piece and said that if I cried again she would give me a belting. Petrified I allowed him to remove the piece of coke and some of the colouring on the outer edge of my eye.

I was a regular visitor to him in my early years in the trade. Safety goggles were not used at our factory when using the grinder and my eyes would pick up a spark every few months. On one occasion I visited a Doctor close to the factory. He had no idea of going about the removal of a foreign body. After awhile I told him in workshop language what I thought of him as a Doctor and walked out his surgery. I drove straight to Doctor Prott, he looked at my eye, saw that the pupil was still enlarged from the drops, removed the foreign body all before I had time to sit down. He was excellent on the eye.

Another time I jammed my forefinger in a machine. I had it x-rayed at the hospital, no broken bones and was told to see my Doctor. This was on a Friday and I had made arrangements to go away for the weekend. I called in to Dunsmore's Chemist where Jennifer Cornish was the Chemist on duty. Jennifer was a qualified Pharmacist at the time, studying to become a Doctor. She recommended a particular ointment and the method of how to treat the laceration. I heeded her advice, went away for the weekend and on my return visited Doctor Prott. When I showed him what Jennifer had prescribed for me, his reply was in a sarcastic manner that went something

like, "if that's what Doctor Cornish recommends then she knows best". At the risk of another slap across the face, I said if it wasn't right, prescribe the right treatment. He replied with "no, no, if Doctor Cornish prescribed it, it must be right". He regularly dressed the wound using Jennifer's ointment until it was on the mend.

Doctor Prott was recognised as being an excellent heart Doctor. He was thought of highly in that field, at St George Hospital.

To some people, they could not take his manner. I now liken this to the way people think politically. Either you liked him or you didn't.

We as a family had first hand experience of his gentle bedside manner when my father was suffering from cancer. Mum would call Doctor Prott at odd times in the night for him to relieve Dad's pain. Whenever he came, he would be dressed in his suit, complete with waistcoat. On one occasion, Mum said to him that he shouldn't fully dress and why not come in his pyjamas and dressing gown.

His reply was that Dad was in enough distress when he arrived and if he thought he had got the Doctor especially out of bed this would only add to his problems. He treated Dad with kindness throughout his sickness.

Doctor Prott was a frustrated Engineer. He once revealed to Dad that he wanted to be an Engineer, however his father strongly encouraged him to take on Medicine. Whenever either Dad or I visited his surgery it didn't take him long to bring the conversation to Engineering. He was particularly interested in my progression through the Fitting and Machining Apprenticeship.

He could also speak at length about boats. Dr. Prott had built a small dinghy and when Ian, my brother who was a shipwright, would have a consultation with Doctor, it wouldn't take long before they were talking boats.

His sport was that of clay pigeon shooting. A friend, Max Gay, told me how he devised a system so Dr Prott could open the boot of his car and quickly erect the firing mechanism to shoot off the clay pigeons. Max instigated the Gungah Bay Bus Service. See Oatley Public Transport. Buses, November 1996.

Another interest was his two motor cars. His baby was a Willys Knight; it was about a 1935 model. After he obtained his 1947 Pontiac, it was rarely used and was housed in his garage. We would occasionally see him use it on his rounds.

The last time I saw Doctor Prott would have been around 1968/69, a year or so after June and I married. We had both visited his surgery and he had seen us out. We were walking down the path towards the gate when he called me back. "Alec" he said, "Do you want to take some advice about Doctors?" "Yes", I replied. "Stay away from the buggers", he then turned and went back into his surgery.

Doctor Howard Prott passed away on Tuesday 20th April 1971.

The Cattery Heritage Group.
Medical Services in Cattery.

28.5.99.

During the 1930's the Kendall's family doctor was Dr E Everingham who had his medical practice headquarters in Penhurst. Dr. Everingham was involved in the Cattery area with Doctors Webb and Prott.

Dr. Everingham had many years earlier contracted polio and an arm and a leg were permanently afflicted and he was considerably handicapped. Because of this he used to drive across vacant blocks in Annette Street to the rear of 108 Rosa Street for easy access to our home.

He was my doctor from the age of about 10 years and he treated my son Howard until the age 8 years. Typical of doctors of that time he was aloof though not in any snobbish way but I doubt if he could cope with the modern "patient questioning" that takes place these days.

Dr. Everingham had a deep interest in dermatology and I believe he lectured at St. George Public Hospital on this subject for many years.

Dr. Everingham was married and had 2 daughters both of whom went to St. George Girls High School

When Dr. Everingham died we were treated by Dr. Campbell and occasionally by Dr. Muir who was not known for his diplomatic bedside manner. Dr. Sampson made up the third member of this medical team. Currently Dr. Don Vao is the current family physician.

The chemist best-known to ^{older} Cattery residents would have to be Alan Danmore who was for many years the chief and only apothecary. He was followed by Doreen Howath and Terry O'Connor. These days Terry's son Anthony and his wife Gillian are in charge of the Chemist shop in Frederick Street. Also the dispensing load is shared with the Corner Pharmacy in Ketchin Street.