

## Introduction

Dr Andrew Nash was born in Doneraile, County Cork, Ireland in 1834. He served his apprenticeship with Dr Barry, a popular physician in a large practice in the town of Mallow in Ireland. His qualifications included an L.S.A., Dublin: L.F.P.S., Glasgow: and L.R.C.P., London. After gaining these qualifications he became assistant to Dr Palmer of Waterford in south-eastern Ireland.

## Arrival in Australia

In 1857 he departed Ireland with his wife Margaret and landed in Melbourne later that same year. The first of his three children, John Brady Nash, was born on the voyage. His first medical practice in Australia was in the colony of Victoria in Kelmore. After maintaining this practice for some years he relocated to Jamieson and shortly after that to Wood's Point. He remained in Wood's Point until late in 1875. In response to an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald by the Wallsend medical Committee seeking a suitably qualified doctor to replace the existing doctor who was leaving due to ill health he applied to come to Wallsend. The advertisement guaranteed 600 patients made up of miners, workmen and their families. In November 1875, Dr Nash moved to the Wallsend Area to take up an appointment as doctor to the employees of the Co-operative Colliery, and his productive relationship with the community of Wallsend was begun.

## Wallsend and the Community

Dr Nash contributed a great deal to the local community. As well as maintaining his general practice, he held a number of important and pioneering positions in the Wallsend locality. He was elected colliery doctor for the Wallsend colliery in addition to his position at the Co-operative Colliery, and was Medical Officer to the Minmi Colliery for some years. Additionally he was a member of the honorary staff of the Newcastle Hospital and took an active part in the Plattsburg Mechanic's Institute and the Wallsend School of Arts. He was a director of the Great Northern Coal Company, Chairman of the Directors of the W & P Gas Company and a local magistrate.

Dr Nash was a popular figure in the area. Apart from his medical pursuits he was a keen sportsman and family man. He was also a partner in the breweries in Armidale and Glen Innes in northern New South Wales. He was reputedly the "life and soul" of the Wallsend Jockey Club and worked tirelessly with his horses and the administration of the club serving as President for some years. This however was ultimately his undoing. He was killed in a riding accident, whilst exercising his favourite steeplechaser "Satellite" in November 1885 at the age of 51. He was crushed when the horse caught its leg and fell.

The obituary in the Singleton Argus on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1885 called him "a citizen with a large warm heart"... a doctor whom everyone loved for his skill kindness and unremitting attention when sickness or care racked the brain and shattered the constitution". The communities high regard for Dr Nash was clearly demonstrated at his funeral. The event was attended by some 4000 people, including Mayors, Doctors, sportsmen and patients, and was described as the largest in the district for more than 25 years. He is buried at Sandgate cemetery.

Dr Andrew Nash was survived by his 3 children. His wife, Margaret, had died after a long illness earlier in 1885. His daughter, Eliza, who had cared for her mother during her sickness, married Samuel Williams in 1892. Both his sons, John Brady and Andrew William became doctors.

On Friday April 21 1893 in front of a crowd of around 2000 people Mr John Kidd Postmaster General of New South Wales opened the Wallsend Mining District Hospital (cheekily referred to by local miners as We May Die Here or just Nash's folly). The president of the Wallsend hospital committee remarked that the completeness of the hospital was in large measure due to doctors Nash and Bean who were indefatigable in their efforts to bring the hospital to a head.

Historically the first patients were admitted in August 1893. It was at this time that the first matron was employed, Miss Blanche Lee who had trained in Nottingham England and the medical officers were Dr Nash, Bean and Mellish.

By September 1893 the hospital is calling for tenders to supply groceries meat and bread. A washerwoman was to be appointed although the appointment of a probationary nurse was deferred. Visiting hours were set for Wednesday and Sunday between the hours of 2 PM and 4 PM and the time of each visit was restricted to ¼ of an hour.

By October 1893 the hospital was in full working order though it lacked an ambulance, morgue and surgical instruments. By December it was found there was not enough accommodation for female patients 4 beds proving inadequate. It was also reported that 26 operations had been performed at the hospital in the prior 12 weeks.

By 1897 the 20 beds were constantly in use and frequently the 4 accident beds were used for non-accident patients and Dr Nash asked for improvements to the operating room he asked for the roof to be made leak proof and for the basins and taps to be modernized.

The hospital continues to function and grow with additions and gradually more staff and in the early 1900s is that knowledge is one of the best of its kind in New South Wales.

It continued to function as the local Wallsend hospital until its closure in 1991 by the NSW government.

### **John Brady Nash**

In 1900 John Nash moved to Sydney to practice in Macquarie Street at which time he became a member of the New South Wales legislative council and remained a member until his death. He had been a Justice of the peace since 1883 and a director of Sydney hospital from 1904 until 1911 as well as its Superintendent for some years and a director of the Royal Prince Alfred hospital from 1917 until 1925. He was also a member of the board of health of New South Wales in 1918 and 1919. He had joined the Lambton fourth regiment volunteer infantry in 1886 and in 1914 served with the Australian Infantry Medical forces in Egypt and the peninsula rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After his return from the war he resumed practice in Macquarie Street as a renal and vesicle surgeon. He had six daughters and died in Sydney hospital in 1925. A memorial service was held at St Mary's cathedral and his remains were also taken to Sandgate cemetery.

After leaving Newcastle in 1900 the practice continued with his younger brother Andrew who himself passed away from sepsis secondary to a finger injury in 1905. It is at this time that we know Dr Frederick Collier is part of the practice until the First World War where he served overseas but returned to the practice thereafter. He brought with him a keen interest in Orthopaedics and the new use of X-rays which were not well understood and repeated exposure led to him losing several fingers on both hands while still carrying on an active surgical practice.

The clinic remained open until the arrival of Dr Charles Firth Pettinger around 1921 who was a stalwart of medicine and surgery in Wallsend until his retirement in 1951. The Wallsend Hospital named its extension The Pettinger wing in the 1970's in tribute to his contribution to its history and added to the legacy begun by John Nash linking the clinic to the local hospital.

Dr Andrew Nash had retained his practice in Nelson Street Wallsend until his death in 1885. At the time his son John Brady Nash, who had been in a medical practice in Lambton since 1883, returned to Wallsend to continue his father's work. John was joined shortly afterwards in 1886 by Andrew (Jnr) who had been in Scotland completing his medical training at the time of his father's death. Together the Nash brothers maintained the tradition their father had established, not only in the excellent provision of medical services, but also with their community involvement.

### Wallsend Hospital

John Brady Nash was active in the local community and it was about this time that records start to show a move toward Wallsend getting a cottage hospital. The initial credit for the suggestion and local agitation is given to local man Mr John Summers in 1885.

At a special meeting between the Wallsend and Plattsburg councils in October 1885 it was determined to proceed but due to some misunderstandings between the councils and Friendly Societies as well as Religious Ministers the process was delayed. This largely related to fund raising and where the funds would go!

It was not until May 1890 that a public meeting was held and Mr Alex Ross, manager of the Wallsend colliery was elected Chairman of a provisional committee for a cottage hospital. On the committee and a future driving force was John Nash. Also on the committee was James Fletcher jnr. Whose father was the first Mayor of Wallsend and a familiar name for us all. By July 1890 they had started to seek a site and it was eventually agreed that Brookstown Heights was ideal with an easterly frontage and drainage toward Ironbark Creek. They proposed to apply to the Wallsend coal company for a grant of 3 acres of land and Dr Nash was instructed to have plans prepared with the purpose of gaining a special grant on the estimate.

Wallsend was a different place back then, imagine it had more than 30 pubs and Minmi had 8. It had a railway line and our major source of energy was coal. How things have changed!

In May 1891 a deputation of the committee representing the Wallsend and Plattsburgh residents visited the premier Sir Henry Parkes to request a special grant in aid of the erection of a district hospital at Wallsend. There was some debate about the funding but Parkes agreed to provide the money equal to that raised by the residents but due to the strikes in the district it was quite poor and it was agreed that the government needed to largely fund the project.

Several steps were undertaken prior to further approvals being granted and Dr Nash reported that he had consulted with the architect Frederick Menkens who had considerable experience with Prince Alfred hospital and other experts and it was estimated that the cost of the building would be £4000. In May 1892 the special grant of £4000 was placed in the AJS bank Wallsend.

Menkens completed the design and it was submitted to the New South Wales board of health by Dr Nash. Wallsend colliery provided the 3 acres as promised and building progressed. The design was hailed as the most complete of its kind at the time. There were in total 22 beds (4 female beds) with the nurses rooms and buildings for cooking and washing some distance from the patients as well as lavatories.

Dr Nash stated: "that the portions of the buildings set apart for the patients were separated from other parts of the building and that the ventilation was such that the air could be changed night and day by natural means. There were 2 windows provided for each bed".

Access to the hospital came from the Wallsend Borough council who agreed to construct the road from Newcastle Road to the hospital at a cost of £69.