

The History of Frenchay Hospital

My dear American Red Cross friends and the director of this show persuaded me to do a strip-tease act as the last number. I was to come on stage with all of the various articles on and, while the piano played the burlesque "take it off! take it off!", do just that. By this time, we had been issued steel helmets, gas masks, the belt on to which canteen cups, etc., could be hung, as well as a completely all-in-one combat suit, of olive drab color. The combat suit was the size to fit an average-size man; and so naturally it looked even more baggy and bulging on a woman of my size. The act consisted of taking it off one by one until I came down to a pale blue flannelette sleeping suit with feet in. This sleeping suit used to be called Dr. Denton's. The particular adult-sized Dr. Denton's used in our show was the property of one of our army nurses. She loaned it for the purpose.

In the show, having stripped down to the Dr. Denton's, I was supposed to take a bow and walk off. However, I myself decided that I would wear one more layer under the pale blue sleeping suit; and that would be my own Class A uniform, consisting of my white blouse with insignia pinned on; and my Air Force blue skirt.

The whole show proved to be a great success; and I myself distinguished myself more as a pretend strip-tease artist than in any of the other things I had ever done to date. When I had started to take off the sleeping suit, some of my concerned friends were afraid that I had forgotten when to stop; and they said afterward that our own chief nurse of the 298th, who was in the audience, and who was known to be of somewhat unaggressive and timid nature, was chewing her nails with distress. However, when Evelyn stood there in her Class A uniform, everyone seemed to be delighted.

One of our medical officers later remarked to his girl friend, "As far as I'm concerned, that was the high point of the whole war."

The History of Frenchay Hospital

One morning in early May of 1944, several of us were having a cup of coffee in a coffee shop in Colwyn Bay when word came over the radios that D-Day had come; and that the invasion of Normandy had started. It was a solemn time, as of course, we had every reason to know that hundreds would be killed and that this was one of the most important events in the history of mankind.

Very soon after this news came over the radios, the entire personnel of the 298th was ordered to line up for departure from Colwyn Bay. When we did this, a great many of the persons living in Colwyn Bay came down to see us lined up there and to applaud and cheer us. We were ordered to travel by train to a place in southern England named Brockley Coombe (spelling?) [Combe. JCB]. Brockley Coombe proved to be a large, green field. There were numerous Nissen huts put up for the purpose of temporarily housing groups of people. In our case, in 1944, the people were being gathered in preparation for invading the continent of Europe.

By this time, we all wore olive drab fatigue uniforms; and we were finally issued another completely covering up suit which was chemically impregnated to protect us against possible chemical warfare stuff sprayed on the ground.

All female personnel of our 298th General Hospital were housed together in large temporary Nissen huts. We ate from our field canteen cups; and all food was prepared in field type utensils. We were all excitedly waiting for the time when we would be taken across the English channel to wherever they wanted us on the continent of Europe.

We actually crossed to a beach in Normandy one month after D-Day. We were taken in two different ships. The total personnel was divided into two groups, each group containing representative specialists in case one of the two ships was destroyed before reaching Normandy.

The History of Frenchay Hospital

This was so that just one of the ships full of hospital personnel could take care of some patients....."

THE STORY OF A NURSE OF THE 117TH US GENERAL HOSPITAL.

In November 2004 I was sent photocopies of pages from a book called 'Texas Women in World War II' (ISBN 1-55622-948-8). One chapter was written by Ruth Prengle, a nurse who had been at Frenchay from 1944-45. The pages came from Robert Day, the 'little boy' mentioned at the end of this text. They met up for the first time since 1944 at the 1992 reunion at Frenchay. At that time there had been much local publicity about the 'return of the Yanks'. Robert got to know of me; he made contact and said that he'd been trying for years to locate a nurse and doctor who had looked after him when he was a boy. The US authorities resolutely refused to reveal any details. Did I have the names and addresses of any doctors or nurses? I said that I had only one of each. These two turned out to be the very ones Robert had been searching for over the years!

Ruth Hamilton Prengle

**Army Nurse Corps, 193rd General Hospital, Malvern, England;
117th General Hospital, Bristol, England**

**"We saved arms and legs that would have been amputated in
World War II**

Ruth Hamilton Prengle looked at the soldier who had just made a 'fresh' remark to her. Staring at the soldier in disgust, she turned her lapel. On the underside she'd pinned a picture of

The History of Frenchay Hospital

Bill, her husband. "I'm a married woman," she said simply. The young man said no more.

Ruth's husband initially disapproved of her joining the military but quickly warmed to the fact, realizing she would want to do her part in the war effort just he did. Bill Prengle then sent instructions to her that sounded more like that of a superior officer than a spouse. He reminded Ruth of her duty to God and country, to herself, and to her subordinates. Above all else, he said, she was to remember that she was an officer and a lady. Indeed, Ruth remained a lady while in the service, a trait that endures today.

When she was five years old, Ruth Hamilton dreamed of being a nurse. "My mother had a friend named Binty who was a nurse and she told me interesting stories;" she says. "Binty took care of Ann Harding, a famous movie star of that era. I thought that sounded pretty exciting." Ruth didn't get to care for a movie star but served her country in the oldest, and perhaps noblest, branch of the women's military, the Army Nurse Corps.

At a general hospital in England she assisted plastic surgeon Dr. Clifford L. Kiehn. Through special techniques that Dr. Kiehn developed, combined with Ruth's nursing skills, arms and legs were saved that would have been amputated in WWI. Ruth tells her story with modesty and pride.

Born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Ruth graduated from the University of Michigan School of Nursing in 1941. She worked in Grand Rapids until she heard that she had passed the licensing exams. Afterward, she moved back to her hometown and started to work at the local hospital.

In the meantime, her future husband had graduated from Carnegie

The History of Frenchay Hospital

Mellon University in Pittsburgh and had accepted a position in Buffalo, New York. "The plan was that I would go to Buffalo and work at Millard Fillmore Hospital," Ruth says. "Toward the end of the year we would be situated so that we could get married. We set December 27, 1941, as the date to get married in Pennsylvania." Her fiancé, William "Bill" Prengle was an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. Thanksgiving week, he received orders to report on December 8, 1941, for one year of active duty. Efforts to get him deferred failed.

Hurriedly, Ruth and Bill married on December 6, 1941, so Ruth could go with him. "Well, Sunday the seventh of December was our famous Pearl Harbor Day," she says. "Bill reported for active duty Monday morning. The army told to him forget that one year because the United States was revving up for big things." Bill was stationed at Langley Field, Virginia, before going overseas in July 1942.

Although Ruth considered enlisting at the time, the Army Nurse Corps policy was to not accept married nurses. "Nurses were marrying like mad because they had boy friends going overseas," Ruth says, "then they were discharged with no replacements. I thought how foolish! There were a lot of nurses like myself who had no children. There was no reason we couldn't be army nurses." In late 1943, the army announced that it would enlist married nurses.

"I didn't tell anybody I was going to do this," Ruth says, "I enlisted, signed the papers, got my orders notarized, and was sworn in, then I told my family. No one objected, or they kept their objections to themselves. They couldn't object, but they didn't faint either." Ruth reported for duty in January 1944.

Basic training at Fort Mead, Maryland, was a rigorous six weeks. "We had to learn all about hospital regulations and the paperwork that

The History of Frenchay Hospital

we would have to do", Ruth recalls. "This was when you just sat down and did your paperwork with a pencil and made five copies of everything." The nurses also learned how to be a soldier. "We marched and drilled. They taught us how to put on a gas mask and we went through the gas chamber. This was real. We climbed up the webbing they have on the sides of ships. There was a whole course like that." At the end of the six weeks, the nurses were allowed to choose their assignments. "I found out there were several General Hospitals getting complements to go overseas," Ruth says. "I checked the uniforms they were taking. Bill had taken only winter uniforms and ended up in England, so that's what I checked for. I could've ended up in Newfoundland or Greenland but fortunately I ended up in England, too." Ruth signed with the 193rd General Hospital established at the University of Michigan and set sail late in February 1944. For nine days, the ship journeyed across the north Atlantic unaccompanied. They ate two meals a day. A few days into the voyage, she assisted a surgeon to perform emergency surgery. Passengers that worked in the hospital got three meals a day, so Ruth worked her way across the Atlantic. "Not that I was a chow hound," she says, "but I would eat a bit at every meal." The ship landed in north Scotland where they boarded trains headed south. "Nobody ever told you anything, you just did as you were told," Ruth says. Night had fallen by the time the one hundred nurses reached their destination for the day. "I found out we were in Colwyn Bay in North Wales. My roommate and I were billeted in a private home. It was bitter cold."

Next morning, Ruth traveled into England. Once they were settled, a staff nurse already serving in the United Kingdom called on the new recruits. She told them what to expect and announced that the chief nurse of the United Kingdom, a Colonel Schaefer, would visit them. "The nurse warned us," Ruth laughs. "She told us to polish our shoes that night and not forget the heels because Colonel Schaefer was very particular. We were scared to death of this Colonel Schaefer." She

The History of Frenchay Hospital

turned out to be a pleasant surprise for Ruth.

"The next morning, we were spit and polished and called to attention," Ruth says, "and here came Colonel Schaefer. I was sitting in the front row and Colonel Schaefer looked at me and smiled. I smiled back. My gosh, It was my operating room supervisor at the University of Michigan when I was a student. I hadn't seen her since I left." Col. Margaret Schaefer's assistant returned to inform Ruth that the colonel wanted to see her. "We had a real good time catching up on one another. I thought it was really nice that I ran into her. I always liked her. She was my favorite instructor." During her tour of duty, Ruth considered Colonel Schaefer her guardian angel. She felt the colonel was responsible for her assignment on the plastic surgery ward with Dr. Clifford L. Kiehn, also from the University of Michigan. Ruth believes Colonel Schaefer arranged meetings just to see how she was faring. One day, Dr. Kiehn asked Ruth to accompany him to his headquarters. On the way, they stopped and had tea and biscuits with the colonel. "It was just the three of us," Ruth remembers. "We had a good time talking about Michigan and a little bit about what we did." Other times, Colonel Schaefer called Ruth to ask her to make an appointment with a dentist who was on staff. She told Ruth not to let the head nurse know, because she didn't want the red carpet treatment. "She'd say, 'I just want to sneak in and sneak out' and I'd agree. Maggie was keeping tabs on me. I really appreciated it, and I think she appreciated the time we had. I never had time to piece it together until I got home." For six weeks, Ruth worked at a station hospital in Ireland in the operating room. She then returned to England to the 193rd, which had moved into a tent, before being transferred to the 117th General Hospital in Frenchay Park near Bristol, England. "Bristol was a seaport town, so hospital ships could come in. We could put patients on them to be sent back to the United States." At this time, the hospitals seemed to be preparing for some big event.

The History of Frenchay Hospital

At the 117th, Ruth worked in the plastic surgery ward. "A few were on the ward when I arrived," she says. "Then the war got more intense. One night, I received fourteen patients in one fell swoop. We worked the rest of the night, then all the next day getting them situated and removing their dressings to determine the extent of their injuries." Because the wounds were fresh, Ruth and her staff had to set up a burn procedure. "It was a real learning process as we went along. To remove the dressings, the patients had to bathe to soak the dressings off. With only three tubs for this part of the process, removing the bandages from all the patients took days.

We were working fourteen-hour days. That was about all you could put up with without taking a break." One Tuesday, Ruth was unable to accommodate a colonel's weekly inspection. When pressed for an explanation, Ruth gave him a tour of the ward and what she and her staff were up against. "We had two nurses and three corpsmen, but there wasn't much patient care I could do because of my duties to run the ward," Ruth says. "Five people and we had to take care of eighteen patients twenty-four hours a day. It was just too much." The colonel must have agreed, because Ruth received several nurses to get the situation under control. "I don't know where they came from or where they went, I was just glad to see them.

"Sometimes following surgery," she continues, "these patients had to have casts on to stay immobile for three weeks. It was pretty hard for those guys, because it was really uncomfortable. We had some excellent results, though. We were able to save arms and legs that would have been amputated in WW I because this procedure didn't exist. It was a real thrill to see a badly damaged leg or arm covered with pink flesh. I only lost three patients during my tour of duty." Ruth served eighteen months overseas.

Ruth remembers a special patient in the fall of 1944. Dr. Kiehn

The History of Frenchay Hospital

notified her that she would receive a five-year-old British boy on her ward. An American army truck had struck the boy in Bristol. One of his legs was injured so badly that the English doctors considered amputation but decided to consult Dr. Kiehn first. He determined the leg could be saved and requested the boy be sent to the 117th where he would arrange the surgery.

After the surgery, Ruth put the boy in a private room next to her office so she could keep her eye on him. His name was Robert Day; they called him Little Robbie. "The ambulatory patients on the ward would stop in and visit with him. I got some children's books from somewhere. The soldiers read to him and gave him gum and stuff like that, spoiling him rotten." Ruth and her staff cared for Little Robbie and got him through his next round of surgery, and then he left the hospital. "I never did hear how he fared after that. I arranged for Dr. Kiehn to see him one more time, but I didn't get to see him at that time."

Before Ruth arrived in England, Bill Prengle had been an aviation engineer there building airstrips for B-24 bombers. Ruth was able to contact Bill and saw him a few times before he was moved to a staging area to train as a soldier again. They were supposed to meet one night. "Bill and I had a pact," she says, "that if he called me and said, 'I can't make it tonight,' I'd know they were going." This coincided with the preparations at the hospital. Ruth didn't know what was going to happen, just that it was something important. "Well, I got the call. I knew he was gone. I didn't sleep very well that night.

"One morning," Ruth says, "I got up early and rode my bicycle to Central Supply to roll bandages or something. I had turned on the radio to listen to some news when I heard General Eisenhower's message that the invasion, later called D-Day, had started. I was on pins and needles for a while." Mid afternoon the first day of that

The History of Frenchay Hospital

invasion, Ruth's hospital received patients wounded in combat.

"A day or so later, some enlisted men from the post office came over to Central Supply," Ruth says. "They said to me, 'Hey Lieutenant, is your husband Captain Prengle?'" Ruth responded that he was and asked why they wanted to know. "The men said that they'd heard on the radio that Bill captured five Germans and took them prisoner. I thought they were just pulling my leg but found out later they were telling the truth." After a while, Ruth received airmail from Bill. "It was just a couple of words to let me know he was still around," she says.

Ruth remained in Bristol until July 1945, when she was moved to a staging area to be sent home for a month's leave for rest and relaxation.

Afterward, the nurses were to regroup for shipment to Japan. "On the boat home, we got the news the first bomb was dropped, and then the second bomb was dropped." Ruth was in Times Square on August 14, 1945, when V-J, Victory in Japan, Day was declared. "I wasn't the nurse that got kissed, though," Ruth laughs, referring to the now famous picture of a sailor kissing a nurse. "None of us could believe the war was really over," Ruth says. "We wondered when the next shoe was going to drop. We wondered if we could really celebrate." They docked in New York on a hot and muggy day. Still in their wool uniforms and carrying gear, the nurses sweltered in the heat. "We had to bring all this stuff back with us," Ruth says. "I had half a tent, a heavy coat with wool lining, a gas mask, and mess gear. We stood on the boat a long time before we could get off." As they disembarked, the Red Cross gave the nurses some cold milk to drink. "Oh, that was wonderful," Ruth remembers, "because we weren't allowed to drink milk in England. Their cows weren't tested for tuberculosis. That cold milk on such a hot day was just wonderful." The nurses boarded buses

The History of Frenchay Hospital

for Fort Dix, New Jersey, where they turned in their gear before receiving orders for leave. "We had to go here and turn that in and go there and turn this in."

Afterward, Ruth went home and rested. "I just laid around and began to feel more like a human being again," she says. "I needed that month off. I don't think I would have survived if I had stayed." After a month, Ruth received orders to report back to Fort Dix.

"We were put on troop trains at Ft. Dix and sent to Gaston, Alabama. If you don't think that wasn't a fiasco," she says. "It was hot and humid, and of course there was no air conditioning. The nurses kept their pyjamas on the whole time. The food was terrible. We were crammed in, and our train was often sidetracked to let a faster train through. It took us three days to travel from New Jersey to Alabama." Once in Alabama, "we had to sit and wait until they decided what was going to happen to us," Ruth says. "Of course we knew we weren't going to Japan, which was really a relief. Finally, we got orders to report to Battey General Hospital in Rome, Georgia, for tests and so forth. They gave us physicals exams and checked us out really well. Then I got my discharge papers and went back home." When Bill was discharged, he returned to college, eventually earning his Ph.D. They moved to Houston in 1947 where he taught chemical engineering at the University of Houston. They have a daughter and a son.

One day in 1992, Ruth received a letter that began with these words, "I don't know if you remember me or not, but. . . ." Ruth knew immediately who it was from. "I thought, 'oh my gosh! It's from Little Robbie.'" The letter was indeed from Little Robbie. Later that year, Ruth attended a reunion in England of another General Hospital out of Michigan University to celebrate the arrival of the hospital there in WWII. "Little Robbie and his mother came to the banquet that night," she says. "He had one little spot on his leg that didn't heal well, but he played Soccer

The History of Frenchay Hospital

growing up," she says proudly. Ruth and Big Robbie have stayed in contact ever since.

A US PATIENT'S MEMORY OF PART OF HIS TIME IN FRENCHAY

This story came to me from a WW2 US patient who was in Frenchay after the Ardennes offensive, I think. Many years later we retraced his steps.

Folly

The Hospital ward in Bristol, England was full of some moaning some laughter and much activity. My name plate read simply Byrne and that of my buddy read, Hawkes. I called Hawkes' attention to the article I had just read: from Desiderius Erasmus, in his essay "In praise of folly". written in 1509, the quote goes: "It is folly alone that stays the fugue of youth and beats off the louring of old age".

On the previous day we had been looking for some kind of reassurance for our plan, and this was it. We pressed on to the office of the American Red Cross, dutifully dressed in our orange hospital-issue pyjamas. I thought we had given a very convincing story of our need for a loan of 10 pounds; I had guessed wrong. After all, we were wounded G.I.s. , had not been paid in four months and needed some walking around money. Hawkes dramatically showed the stitches in his leg and I was taking off my shirt to further our patriotism to the unsympathetic clerk. Her touching reply was. "The limit on emergency pay is 10 shillings apiece, and we will deduct it from your back pay". We hobbled out of Miss Legree's office, more determined than ever to culminate our preconceived plan.

Our ward janitor was a displaced person from Poland and was waiting out the war in Bristol doing odd jobs. For two packs of our cigarette ration, we were clothed in soiled wrinkled, discarded army fatigue

The History of Frenchay Hospital

uniforms. We did, in fact, look like displaced Persons. So far so good, but we were still two miles from Bristol.

We slithered through shrubbery to the coach road, put out our thumbs and found a true patriot. We rode in the back of an open, horse-driven, cart for two miles to downtown Bristol. Every bounce of the cart over the cobblestone concourse stretched our sewn up bodies to the threshold.

We arrived in the heart of downtown Bristol and with a hearty "Cheerio" to the driver, spied our next objective, the Mauritania pub. A grand old edifice with a wide staircase, high oak columns and a welcome look, greeted us, The stairs could be a problem, hut slowly with both bands gripping the thick hand rail, we again accomplished our mission. We looked into the homely interior and, with sighs of relief, we planted our battered hulks into the plush chairs. The room large and occupied by service people from many places, but none clothed like us.

We didn't know how long our luck would hold out and were happy to see our pretty barmaid. "Been a long time, I see".

We quaffed down the two pints and finally could give a relaxed sigh of relief. Due to our generosity to the friendly barmaid we had only shillings enough left for a glass apiece which she brought hastily. The hearty British ale was doing its task mellowing us with a false sense of courage.

We were now running out of luck. The M.P.s. were looking suspiciously in our direction. Mr. Hawkes suggested, "Shall we adjourn to the officer's club?", interlocking arms for mutual support, I stood straight, even overly straight. Hawkes, using his stiff right leg as an outrigger, we hobbled toward our objective. Across the hall, through the swinging doors put us in Officers' Country. Our new strategy, concocted in our hazy minds. was to find someone from our units.

The room was crowded with officers standing, sitting. smoking and drinking We scanned the area hoping to find anyone with either of our division insignias. "Pardon me, sir", I breathed on a major, "Anyone

The History of Frenchay Hospital

here from the 29th or the 2nd divisions?" He backed away a bit, "Yes I've seen the 2nd, but it's so crowded I couldn't tell you where." The enemy, M.P.'s., were coming through the swinging doors a little behind us. We advanced toward the bar, still hoping for rescue.

From the opposite end of the bar came a loud feminine voice, "What the hell do you clowns think you are doing?" It was the melodious voice of our ward nurse, Capt. Rodgers. She & Lt. Bancroft were enjoying their day off. We hurried to their side, not any too soon, as our aggressors approached and clamped their heavy hands on our shoulders. They requested I.D.'s. Capt. Rodgers turned revealing her silver bars and nurse's insignia. "I'll take care of this Sgt., you are dismissed", she ordered.

We stood attentively with heads bowed and accepted her chastisement. When she was through, my buddy Hawkes, in a true British accent queried, "My good ladies, could you direct us to a proper tailor we're in need of something in olive drab, preferably gaberdine". "Sit down you idiots", was her prompt reply, adding "are you sure you don't also have head injuries?".

"Capt. could you please request Lt. Bancroft not to tickle my feet when bathing me." I added.

The stern looks turned to smiles and we had a joyous afternoon. drinking scotch and sodas, listening to American songs on the jukebox and complimenting the nurses on their choice of companions. As all good things must come to an end, so did this. "Up & at 'em boys. you're going home" ordered the Capt., fearing we might not be mobile. We, all four, locked arms: our Florence Nightingales on the flanks as we crossed the grand ballroom and headed for the staircase. Hawkes & I, anesthetized by now, felt no pain: I congratulated the nurses for the healing miracle. Hawkes halted the phalanx and asked if anyone would like to dance.

We were urged forward and down the staircase to our hospital bus. When we arrived at our ward, the lights had just gone out and our

The History of Frenchay Hospital

comrades were bedded down, We triumphantly marched toward our bunks through the jeers of the rabble such as : "Boy, are you guys in shit". "There's a search party out looking for two Polacks". "The Doc was here to take out your stitches".

Before we groped for our beds Hawkes cautioned, "Ignore the peasants, old man, splendid day, we must do it again sometime". My costume slid to the floor in a pile. I settled my stitches into the snugness of the bed. Pleasant thoughts of the day started to race through my fuzzy mind and I couldn't even remember the words of Desiderius Erasmus which inspired us to our Folly.

Hugh C Byrne

The History of Frenchay Hospital

HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK IN 1994.

1998: Thoracic Surgery, the first specialty to move into the hospital after the US forces left, was relocated to the Bristol Royal Infirmary

April 1999: Frenchay and Southmead NHS Trusts merged to become the North Bristol NHS Trust. Frenchay DHQ - the Georgian House - became the HQ of the new Trust.

1999: The Admin buildings near the lime tree drive entrance were demolished and new buildings put up to house the re-located Burden Neurological Unit from the old Stoke Park complex. Completed in 2000.

1999: Ward 29 and the original 1930s school building were demolished in the Spring and a new facility built - the MacMillan centre. Completed in 2000.

1999: Wards 8, 9 and 10 were demolished and a new unit built - the Barbara Russell Children's Unit funded by the Jack & Jill Appeal. Opened May 2000.

1999: The old lodge house near the lime tree drive entrance was taken over by the Frenchay Tuckett Society and turned into the Frenchay Village Museum. Opened April 2000.

2000: Block 95/96 (?used for what in US times) and the adjacent two long blocks, used respectively as a gymnasium and VD ward in US times, and as residences later, were demolished in July. In the roof space of the gymnasium were discovered numerous insignia of the patients' Units.

The History of Frenchay Hospital



Some of the
revealed in
space

Insignia
the roof



The History of Frenchay Hospital

2003. The stable block (circa 1890) of the Georgian house, having become progressively more derelict over the decades, was finally 'rescued'. A year or two earlier the NHS Trust had donated the building to the Multiple Sclerosis Society to be made into a 'Centre of Excellence'. By June 2003 planning permission had been granted for the work and the work itself was hoped to start later in the year. £1.5 million needed to be raised. However, the prospect of total closure of the Frenchay campus was still being actively considered and the MS Soc became unsure about the viability of their scheme. By October 2003 things were still not clear. However, in November, the charity cancelled their plans. The fate of any future MS centre remains unclear. By 2005 there was still no clear future for the building. Things were complicated even more by the uncertainty of the whole site raised by the proposed redevelopment of the hospital services in North Bristol - see below.

2004/05

During 2004 the whole future of NHS services in and around Bristol was under consideration. Within this was the future of both Frenchay and Southmead hospitals. It was felt that major hospital services should, and could, only be provided on two Bristol sites. Since the BRI was already undergoing major upgrade, this meant that either Frenchay or Southmead would cease to be a major hospital and that all their combined services would be located on one or other site. However, both sites would also contain a 'Community' hospital with out-patient, minor injuries, X-ray facilities and, possibly, some rehabilitation beds.

On 2nd March 2005, following all the consultation that had taken place, the outcome was announced. Southmead was to be the site of the major hospital, along with its Community version. Frenchay would become a Community hospital, with all the changes to be complete within the next 8 years. ?RIP Frenchay hospital?

However, things became very complicated as a result of other Govt

The History of Frenchay Hospital

initiatives. It became clear that, because of the 'Patient first' policy, which meant that all patients needing hospital treatment had to be offered a choice of at least 5 hospitals, then it could be that the development of the major hospital at Southmead (or Frenchay, come to that, if that had been the choice) could possibly attract insufficient patients to bring in enough of the planned estimated income. Further complications were associated with yet another Govt scheme. They had established a purely surgical hospital at Shepton Mallet with plans to build a similar unit 'in close proximity to the M32'. I wonder where that could be?!!

2007

In February 2007 the Govt. finally gave the go-ahead for the Southmead development, with a planned start in 2008 and completion in 2013. In April the future of Cossham Hospital was clarified- it had been Cossham & Frenchay Hospital Management Committee when I started back in 1966 . Here's what appeared in the Evening Post: "06/04/07. Services at the refurbished hospital will include outpatient clinics, community clinics including physiotherapy, a minor-injury unit, imaging, including x-ray and ultrasound, and a patient information centre.

The plans also include improved accommodation for the Alma Road practice and local authority community care staff based on the site. The development will mean Kingswood residents will only have to go to major hospitals for more specialist treatments."

2008

In March it was announced NHS South West has put aside £19 million for Cossham hospital's refurbishment. It is expected that work will start in 2009 with completion in 2010 and will contain a stand-alone birth centre run by midwives.