

**Recorded:** 19.01.2022 & 17.02.2022  
Interviewer: Jo Wilson  
Abstractor: Liz Holland (File 01-04) and Jo Wilson (File 05-06)

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*The time codes in this abstract summary have been recorded based on the original audio files. Please note that the times may differ for the online audio due to the original files being combined into one file. However, the order of content in this abstract below will match the online audio.*

*\*Dates removed for privacy and security reasons. For enquiries related to genealogy, please apply directly to the Central Otago Oral History Project manager.*

**File 01 16.02.2022**

0:00 Education in NURSING and MIDWIFERY  
Arrived in NZ 1967, sailed in SS RANGITANI

EMPLOYMENT

SCOTLAND “home” midwifery for postgraduate experience.

WOMEN and CHILDRENS’ HOSPITAL, BELFAST, IRELAND.

Compared working situations between Ireland and Scotland

6.19 RECALLS - “THE TROUBLES” – not safe going into city at night.  
IAN PAISLEY – [Leader Democratic Unionist Party] 6 children, delivered his twins. Hospital run along military lines, very strict rules and regulations.

10.00 1966 – 67 IRELAND  
Recalls -Looked at different countries to work. Had 35 pounds, not enough to get to Canada. 10 pounds to get to NZ. A “10 pound Pom”.  
Agency work in LONDON prior to leaving NZ. Culture of Orthopaedic Ward.  
PORT of LONDON- 3<sup>rd</sup> to last boat sailing NZ SHIPPING COMPANY. 1,000 passengers, single class.  
Like a 6 week holiday.

19.29 As sponsored person, placed in a hospital. Arrived PORT of AUCKLAND. Met by 2 Immigration Officers, stayed Immigration Centre. Next day to AVON MATERNITY UNIT next to STRATFORD HOSPITAL. Lived in Nurses Home. First impressions “rattly old buses”, “kids barefoot”.  
Worked next day, and soon on night duty. Nurse Aids, no registered staff. Babies in nurseries at night. First birth on own. GP ROSS GORDON, Obstetrician  
–brother PETER GORDON , MP Southland;  
GRAHAM GORDON, anaesthetist at general hospital; parents BILL and DORIS Gordon [both medical doctors]. Dr DORIS CLIFTON-GORDON, (nee JOLLY) wrote books ‘Dr Down-Under’, & ‘Back Blocks Baby Doctor’) DORIS opened first maternity unit at STRATFORD, called MARIRI. Pioneered anaesthesia in child-birth. (?)  
Recalls some specific births with husbands present and Doctor not present. Different system from UK. Made complaint; left after 5 months for ST HELENS , WELLINGTON. Worked Delivery Suite 18 months. Like “Watties canning factory” so busy. Greek patients. Describes.

**End of File 01.**

**File 02 19.01.2022**

WELLINGTON. Maternity unit very busy. Lived in Nurses Home – INANGAUA EARTHQUAKE [24 MAY 1968]. Wooden building rattled.

02.16 RANFURLY, SOUTH ISLAND. Friend in ALEXANDRA, visited by train. Bought MORRIS 1100 – didn't have a licence. Driving memories. Describes.

09.29 **End of File 02**

**File 03 17.02.2022**

0.49 Driving memories continued.

1.23 1970s – Career as expected. Caesarean Sections a “dirty word”, not common. Contraception for single women “tut tutted”. Remembered 1 birth of single woman and child adoption. Compared with UK practices. Change of attitudes since then. Care of mothers and babies very regimented. PLUNKET system supported routines, PLUNKET RECORD BOOK. Describes

13.10 VACCINATIONS. Wasn't pro-vaccination for 6 week old babies. Vaccine compromised children. Pro-vaccination for own children for Polio - nursed children in IRON LUNGS in UK. Recalls.

17.31 BED SORES. People kept in bed. Ward tidy. Mental Health not considered. “Backs in bed”, 3 times a day. Sheep Skins used to ease pressure points. Lifted patients manually. Describes.

20. 40 HOSPITAL PRACTICES – Cleaning duties; people allowed to smoke in hospitals; hospital level care given to older people as no where else to go. PHYSIOTHERAPISTS on ward all day. Storage of equipment. Describes.

25.00 STUDENT NURSES –on the job training in UK “Apprentice” system. REGISTERED STAFF NURSE and 3-5 students. Routines to follow. Worked in pairs. Uniforms. Describes.

28.29 **End of File 03**

**File 04 17.02.2022**

00.04 Duties: Bedpan rounds; sterilisers; sluice room; collecting dentures. Little experience, lots of responsibility. Giving injections. Followed rules. Senior Sisters had been in Armed Services. Drugs used; Iron Injections. Describes.

06.14 RANFURLY 1969 – 1984 – Midwife and General Nursing. Then to CLYDE [DUNSTAN HOSPITAL] until 2000. GENERAL SURGERY compared with KEY HOLE SURGERY. Only X-RAY and Clinical skills, not the diagnostic tools available today. AUTOCLAVES for sterilisation rather than disposable equipment. Describes.

13.31 **End of File 04**

**Abstracted from here by Jo Wilson**

**File 5 11.07.2022**

- 0.41 DUNSTAN HOSPITAL. May 1984 school holidays, realised her marriage had ended, so needed to shift out of MANIOTOTO. Applied for job in Oamaru, interviewed by very young nurse-didn't get job. Got job in DUNSTAN HOSPITAL via MATRON BERYL SMITH, as a midwife. (Helped as General nurse only when needed.) Had 6-7 nurses/ward. Lived in Matron's flat for 3 years.
- 3.20 Birth rate low, less than 20/month, mothers stayed in hospital for 2 weeks, malleable attitude to care.
- 4.35 Had own 2 children. Schooled at ST GERARDS SCHOOL. Bought house in Kerry St, ALEXANDRA, in May 1987.
- 5.50 They went onto ST KEVINS, OAMARU. Brought up CATHOLIC, (due to Paternal grandmother & Father.) Travelled home for school holidays. Boarding school suited working night-shifts.
- 7.46 Received a letter written every Sunday night by Stewart, Clare by telephone. STEWART father of twin boys in UK. CLARE in Wellington, works for coffee-roasting company. Father's contact was stopped by the children at 10/11years old.
- 11.52 Boarding School fees took over from Mortgage payments.
- 12.40 DUNSTAN HOSPITAL built at Clyde [2005]. Rivalry with Cromwell. Limited personal transport meant many smaller hospitals in rural areas.
- 13.20 Had TRAIN SERVICE Alexandra to Cromwell. (One rail car/day one way.) Caught train to DUNEDIN & return trip left there 4.35pm. Very basic service – slow, no refreshments. Describes first trip from Christchurch to Ranfurly in 1970's.
- 17.30 DUNSTAN. Pre-dam built at CLYDE. Friend KAY in CROMWELL. Increase of workload when dam being built. ILA did 9 years of night-duty. Describes one night with 8 new patients admitted. (2 had independent mid-wives). GP Doctors had complete control and hospital just for birthing.
- 21.30 Mid-wives in hospital became more autonomous, (Doctors backed off), did more domiciliary work, ante & post-natal. HOME BIRTHS only offered by independent mid-wives. Describes domiciliary mid-wife when in Scotland.
- 26.00 Second story in Scotland, in tenement building. BREAST FEEDING not common. Repeat pregnancies were.
- 29.30 BREAST FEEDING – went in cycles, women reluctant to 'expose' themselves, even if much cheaper & easier & hygienic. Describes views. Regimented PLUNKET regime described.
- 34.00 Recollection of new mother & her grandmother in DUNSTAN HOSPITAL & 2<sup>nd</sup> recollection in house visit. Importance of relaxation & bonding.

**38.11 End of File 05**

**File 06 11.07.2022**

- 0.20 ANTENATAL CLASSES. Only person keen to do them in Maniototo. Fathers were dragged along and didn't participate. Appreciated. Encouraged breast feeding.
- 1.49 Unpaid domiciliary calls referred by Doctors or other mid-wives around the area. A lot of work and commitment described. PLUNKET NURSE was also DISTRICT & SCHOOL NURSE. (And on-call for her weekends off). A lot of driving – only car provided for nurse.

- 5.40 ANTENATAL CLASS MATERIALS - books and videos bought. A full review of pregnancy & post-natal care. No funding available.
- 6.58 STUDENT NURSES/TRAINEE MID-WIVES. Described. (Polytech training only began late in her career and became independent).
- 8.18 Birth Rate declining. Down to <10/month. But area expanded as mothers stayed with family for the birth, but lots of travel for post-natal care.
- 10.18 Continuing Professional Development. Less emphasis after basic training. More in 1970s, but only Queen Mary in Dunedin mid-wives were involved. At Dunstan Hospital, had in-house meetings, and included some Southland staff.
- 12.40 Story of a patient taken to Queens Mary's 'back door' – in middle of the night.
- 14.23 Occasional emergency CAESAREAN SECTIONS carried out in 'country' hospitals by GPs.
- 15.20 Rate of CAESAREAN SECTIONS increased. Explains.
- 16.11 Mentions KEELAN'S FORCEPS. Museum piece now. Non-interference is best if possible.
- 19.01 Rate of CEREBRAL PALSY less. "Doctors bury their mistakes" quoted.
- 20.55 Warm baths for mothers at end of Stage 1 labour, but not used for birthing. Independent mid-wives do WATER-BIRTHS. Describes.
- 22.23 **End of File 06**