

## Throwback Thursday: Carers in our Community Thursday 16 April 2020

Welcome to Throwback Thursday: Carers in our Community – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

Thursdays has become the day that we all gather on our doorsteps or at our windows and Clap for our Carers at 8pm, in great appreciation of all those who are caring for us during this time of crisis.

For today's post we welcome Chris Protz, local historian and Vice-chair of the [Friends of Bruce Castle](#), as our guest writer:

“ In these months of our current health emergency, let's take a look back at another time, long before the establishment of the NHS in 1948, when Bruce Castle played its part in addressing crucial health needs.



Photograph once owned by the Hankin family showing Bruce Castle, c.1910-1920

© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Bruce Castle has had many incarnations in its long life: a manor house, a family home, a school, and today as a museum. When it opened as Tottenham Museum

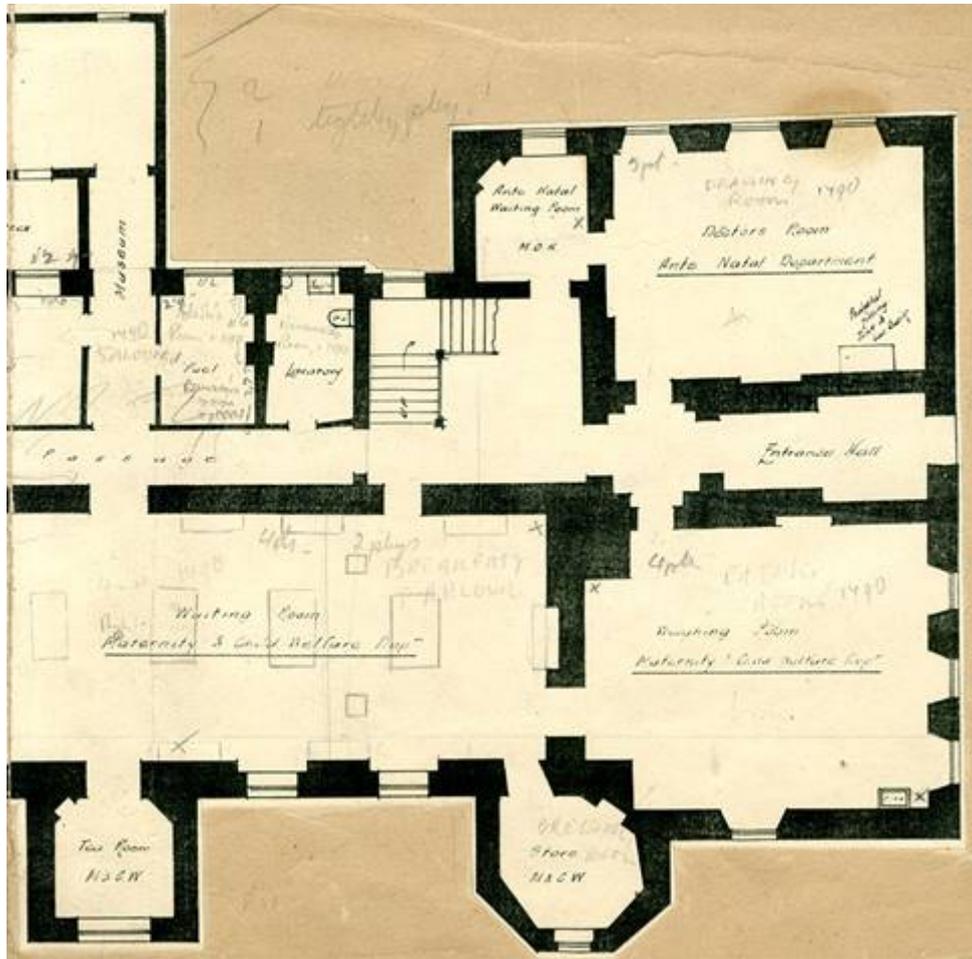
in 1906, it also housed the office of the Tottenham Board of Health. Following the end of the First World War, in 1919, the museum became a very different place in the community when rooms and galleries were transformed into a Health Clinic for mothers and children. Looking at plans held in Bruce Castle's archives we can follow how the building changed and adapted, and how this fitted in with its previous life as a school and then its life as a museum.

There are particularly vulnerable times in a person's life: being born, childhood and giving birth. The considerable risks of childbirth for mothers had begun to be addressed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the organisation of a more widely available and professional domiciliary midwife service, but infant mortality (deaths up to the age of one) continued to be high. Before the First World War this was as much as 160 deaths per 1,000 births in South Tottenham. To help address this, the Borough's first Health Clinic opened in 1912 in St Ann's Road.

Health Clinics sought to manage the needs of maternal and child health with the provision of ante-natal, natal and child welfare up to the age of five, providing a comprehensive system for supporting the health of a child from before birth to starting school. The St Ann's clinic was followed by another one at 684 High Road, and in 1919 this transferred to Bruce Castle.

Partitions were hastily erected in the Castle's large rooms, creating smaller areas for waiting, consultation and treatment. The Museum's amazing archives contain the plans for these alterations showing the different rooms. They may have used plans already in existence, and we can just about make out the ghostly words of 'library' and 'dormitory' for some of the rooms from the time it was a school, and other rooms on the ground floor when it was a family home.

The ground floor was for maternity and infant welfare. The ante-natal department was in the gallery where we have the present Inventors' Centre and new Family Room. It had formerly been the drawing room when Bruce Castle was a family home; it had now become a doctor's room and small waiting room.



Detail of the ground floor plan of Bruce Castle c.1919  
 © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

In the opposite gallery (formerly the 'entrance room') was the all-important weighing room, where progress of infants could be measured by the amount of weight gained.



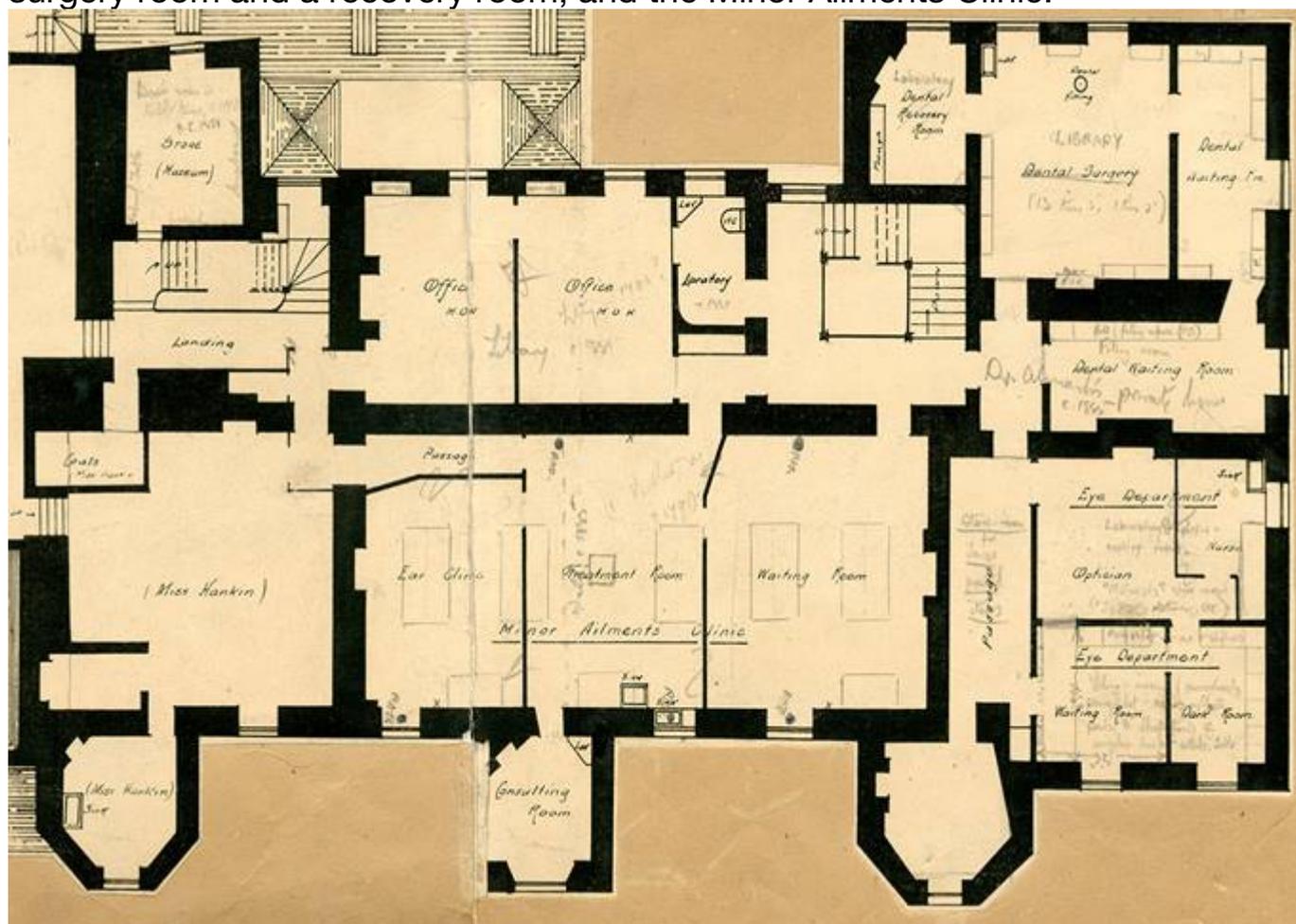
This photograph is from the child welfare clinic at Park Lane during the 1940s.  
 © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

A store in a turret room alongside (formerly a dressing room and now the 1930s Office exhibition) kept provisions, such as dried milk, for this department. The

service provided in these rooms was key to addressing the issue of maternal and infant mortality. Infant mortality, often caused by poor hygiene and feeding practices, was countered with advice and supported with the provision of proper baby food where the mother could not breastfeed.

There was a larger waiting room in the back gallery, with a small tea room where we currently have the main museum entrance. The main way into Bruce Castle in those days was on the north side between the ante-natal and weighing rooms.

The first floor housed the Eye Department, with rooms for the optician, a nurse and a dark room for eye tests, a Dental Department, with two waiting rooms, surgery room and a recovery room, and the Minor Ailments Clinic.



© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Above is a detail of the plan of the first floor of Bruce Castle c.1919, showing what are now the Compton (front) and Coleraine (back) Galleries in the museum partitioned into smaller rooms. The Coleraine Gallery was carved into two rooms for the Medical Officer of Health who was also allocated a kitchen on the attic floor. The Compton Galley was made into the Minor Ailments Clinic which included the Ear Clinic, Treatment Room and Waiting Room and a consulting room in the small alcove under the clock tower. Three more rooms on the top floor were for doctors.

We can imagine the ground floor as quite a cheerful place, with teas provided for waiting women, many with children running around. They perhaps welcomed the break from their daily routine and had a chance to chat with other mothers, and

expectant mothers, swapping advice and stories of childbirth. Think *Call the Midwife!*

It was a different story on the first floor where we find the Dental Department with its surgery room and recovery room, with a sluice. That ominous sluice brings back memories (from the 1950s) of one woman's terrifying experience of being held down in a dental chair for the anaesthetic. Then in the 'recovery room', coming round from the blackness of the anaesthetic and joining other children as they spat blood into the sluice. It was a conveyor belt carnage for extracting milk teeth. It was not all bad, though, as mother and child then crossed over to the baker's shop and a sweet cake was bought as a reward. No, we did not know too much about the dangers of sugar then!



Dental treatment, Park Lane clinic, 1920s (left) and at Lancasterian School, the end of the First World War (right). © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

And what about the minor surgeries treatment room? This could also be brutal, as one former resident recalled in the 1920s. She was taken to Bruce Castle as a five-year old child to have her tonsils removed. A few hours later, after a general anaesthetic, bloody and sore, the little girl was wheeled home in a pram by her mother to recover at home as best she could. Rather brutal treatment to our mind perhaps, but possibly helpful for a child, the youngest of six, who had recurrent sore throats and was living in a small, overcrowded and damp home.

If you are wondering about the number of waiting rooms, they would be needed for the many mothers and children waiting to be seen, processed and examined, all without appointments. Waiting times could be long, with one woman recalling '*They used to weigh the baby and that. It took about five minutes, and you waited half to three-quarters of an hour.*' There were smaller rooms for mothers waiting for children to emerge from treatment. Mums were allowed to take their children home, but on no account to comfort them during treatment or even during recovery.



Park Lane Clinic, 1940s © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The purpose of these clinics was to improve the health of working class women and their children. Sometimes their methods were basic and perhaps harsh, and invariably patronising, but the outcome was an improvement in the health of these most vulnerable members of society, particularly in relation to deaths in childbirth and infant mortality.

The provision of such clinics was important and shows how progressive the council's Medical Officer was in Tottenham, paving the way for the wave of purpose-built child welfare clinics in the area from the late 1930s into the 1940s. Tottenham was shown as an exemplar of best practice, prior to the NHS being established in 1948.



Clinic at Tottenham Town Hall, 1940s © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

During the years of the Bruce Castle Health clinic the old manor house still clung to parts of its previous usages. The Museum scaled down, still keeping many rooms for its own use, including the back gallery on the ground floor and the Victorian extension and its first floor.

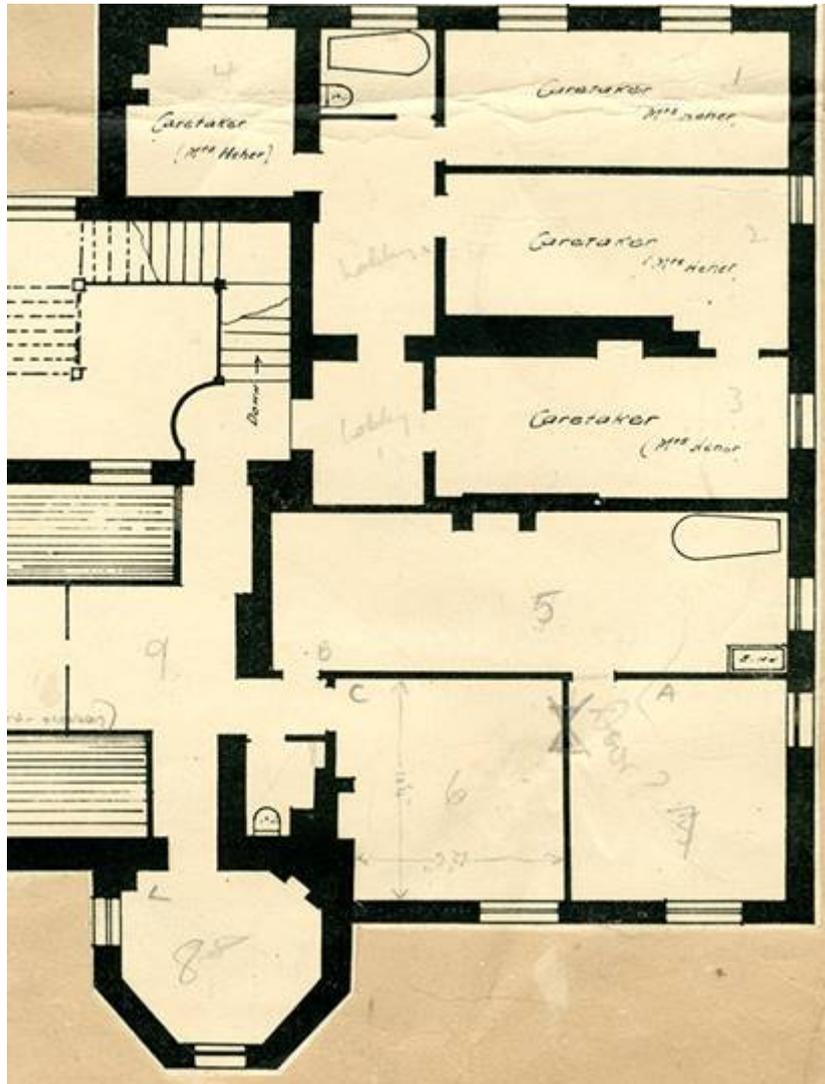


School children visiting the museum in 1931

© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The Old Kitchen, meanwhile, was a designated mess room for park staff, with their own pantry. To the right of the kitchen door was a rather mysterious room designated as the scullery with a sink - and a bath. It is unclear what this bath was for, or whether this room was for park staff, the museum or the clinic.

On the attic floor, most importantly, there was a suite of four rooms and a bathroom designated for the caretaker Mrs Heher. It is unusual to find a woman being the caretaker. We believe she must have been married to Thomas Heher, formerly the caretaker at Tottenham Library, and perhaps took over from Thomas after his death. Florence Heher is the possessor of an unusual occupation for a woman, an unusual name (possibly with Irish links) and an unusual place of birth - Sierra Leone in Africa. An interesting woman and worthy of more research we think.



© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

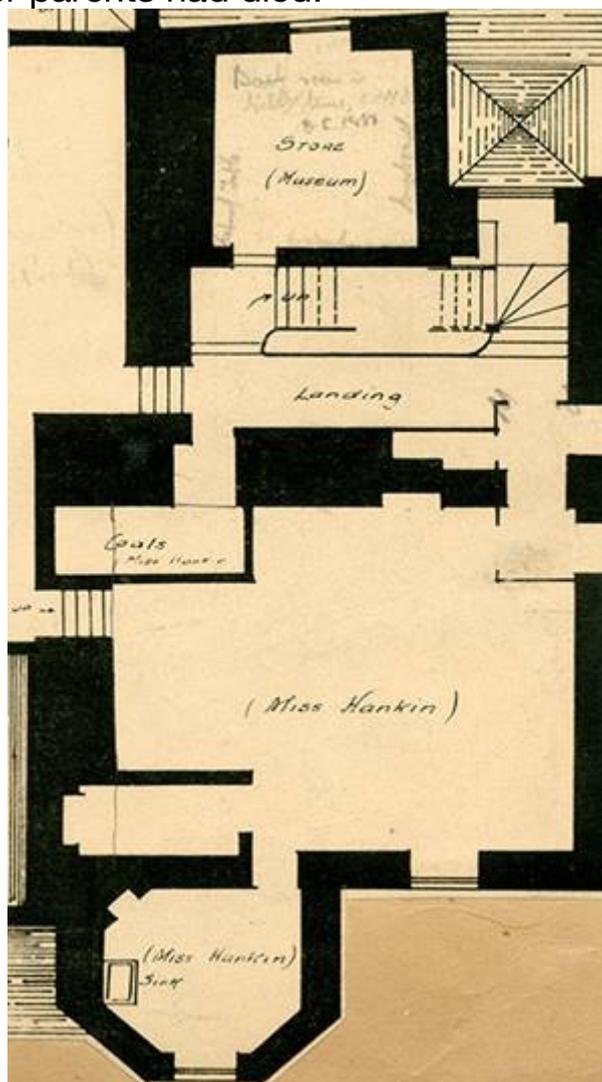
Another interesting woman occupied two rooms on the first floor, alongside the Minor Ailments Clinic. Here, in the present day Search Room and turret room leading off it, we find a Miss Hankin. Who was Miss Hankin, and what was her role in Bruce Castle?

Fortunately, we can build up a picture with information provided by a member of the Hankin family, the widow of Geoffrey Hankin. The Hankins were servants who worked for the Victorian Bruce Castle School from 1851 onwards. Mr Hankin managed the building and school grounds (now the park of course) and Mrs Hankin was the school matron. They lived in the main house, probably where the caretaker's rooms are, and continued to manage the building after it ceased to be a school. One of their children was Mary Ann, known as Dolly by members of her family.

Name		Age	Sex	Religion	Marital Status	Occupation	Address	Remarks
Mrs Mary Elizabeth Hankin	Widow	55	Female	Anglican	Single	Caretaker	10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	Widow of Geoffrey Hankin, who died in 1885. She was the school matron.
Mary Ann Hankin	Single	55	Female	Anglican	Single	Caretaker	10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	Daughter of Mrs Hankin. Known as Dolly.

The 1911 Census entry above for Bruce Castle shows Mary Elizabeth Hankin, a widow, as the caretaker employed by Tottenham Public Library, as well as an entry for her daughter, Mary Ann Hankin.

We believe Dolly (or Mary Ann) was the 'Miss Hankin' shown on the plans. There is a 1901 dictionary in the archives, donated by the family, with an inscription dated April 1902 on the title page showing it was owned by 'M. A. Hankin of Bruce Castle, Tottenham'. Dolly Hankin was clearly living in Bruce Castle in 1901, after the school closed, and it appears she continued to live there from 1911 onwards, after both her parents had died.



© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The turret room had a sink and was probably Dolly Hankin's wash room. Her rooms gave her a view over the park looking towards Lordship Lane. Geoffrey Hankin remembered as a child coming back from Bruce Grove School walking past Bruce Castle and waving to his Aunt Dolly standing at one of the windows. Dolly Hankin was 63 when the clinic moved in, and we wonder whether she was pleased with the arrival of so many other people in the large house, or whether she found it very disturbing. We know she continued to live there until her death in 1939. An announcement in the *Weekly Herald* reads:

**HANKIN** In loving memory of our dear sister (Dolly) Mary Ann Hankin, of Bruce Castle, Tottenham, who passed away at the North Middlesex Hospital July 1<sup>st</sup>, aged 83 years.

The Museum was expanding with important postal history collections arriving in 1927.



Schoolchildren work with Museum staff making a stegosaurus at Bruce Castle in readiness for the local carnival in 1936 – usually the carnival raised money for the local Prince of Wales Hospital at Tottenham Green. Such fundraising helped to pay for beds and other equipment, much needed before the NHS was introduced in 1948

© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

A new clinic opened down the road in Lordship Lane in 1937, and the Museum was redesigned yet again. There was a lot of change during the inter-war years of multi-occupancy at Bruce Castle. In 1939, Miss Hankin was the last connection with Bruce Castle School. The Museum was about to embark on the next period of significant change, still serving the community – this time working with the Ministry of Information and displaying exhibitions and public information for the war effort at the outset of the Second World War. But that is another important story to be told ... “



© Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Thank you to Chris for sharing this important story as we remember carers and the caring profession past and present.

Let us join in once again this evening at 8pm and Clap for our Carers. See you at the window or on the doorstep.

Take care, keep well, stay indoors.

Best wishes

From us all at Bruce Castle

**Deborah Hedgecock**

**Curator**

Haringey Council

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