

George Dash

Extract from the book about Isle of Wight Hospitals by Dr Laidlaw

The career of hospital servant, George Dash, was remarkable. He was born in London in 1824, both his parents died before he was 13 and in 1837 he came to Newport to live with his uncle. Soon after this he joined the Royal Navy, but was invalided out in 1845.

He was appointed the Gardener and Porter to the hospital before it opened in 1847-48 and among his duties in the early years was pumping up the water from the well near the front gate into the tank in the roof twice daily. This heavy work, it was said, led to a marked muscular development and he was accustomed to carrying patients whenever necessary.

In 1858 he was given permission to marry provided he lived in the Lodge which was built for him. In 1860 a bell was fixed to ring in his home from the Main Door or Gate at night, so his job included that of Night Porter.

In 1867, the Chairman informed the Committee that George Dash was in the habit of extracting teeth and dressing wounds in the absence of the House Surgeon. The Committee resolved that he should not act in this capacity except in the presence of the House Surgeon and, in 1873; he was prohibited altogether from these functions. The problem of dental extraction was partly

solved when the Chairman informed the Committee that he had had a letter from a Mr HARRINGTON 'Declaring his willingness to extract all teeth sent to him by the infirmary'.

Later George Dash took on the job of Dispenser, and it was at his suggestion that the Dispenser's salary was increased to £65 per year. Later again the Committee decided that the House Surgeon was the man who had legal responsibility for running the Dispensary.

In 1898 the minutes state that "George Dash, an old and respected servant of the hospital, was to act in future only as the General Porter and not as Dispenser'. A lady was appointed the Dispenser and Secretary but clearly George Dash had been doing the job for about fifteen years.

By 1900 he had more or less given up regular work but he lived in the Lodge with his wife and was pleased to help any of the staff in any way he could and he kept the front of the hospital tidy. He had three married daughters and in 1919 was a widower. He finally retired and left the lodge, which was taken over to provide nursing accommodation. He went to live with one of his three married daughters in Carisbrooke having served the hospital for over 70 years. He died in 1923 and is buried in Ryde cemetery.