

09/12/2013

Eileen Howard

Eileen was born in Edmonton, North London, was evacuated at the beginning of WW2 but was back home by Christmas 1939. After the house was bombed twice during 1940, Eileen's evacuation resumed and she did not see her home again until 1948 and then only briefly because the opportunity came for her family to move to Beckenham in the same year. She has lived in the same house ever since.

Due to family commitments, it was not until 1961 that she applied to Beckenham Hospital and was accepted for nurse training.

(Photo: Eileen on right at qualifying ceremony)

Eileen qualified as SRN in 1964 and then did Part 1 Midwifery during 1965/66 at Beckenham Maternity Hospital in Stone Park Avenue .

She returned to Beckenham Hospital as staff nurse to Sister and was promoted to Sister on the Male Surgical Ward in September 1966 and she remained in that post until retirement in 1989.

The Hospital was continually under threat of closure due to various financial crises in the Bromley Group of Hospitals. It was small and vulnerable and situated in the centre of Beckenham. Numerous attempts were made to partially or completely close it and sell off part or all of the land. The staff had formed an Action Committee and asked Eileen to be Chairman and they fended off these threats. But as pressures increased, they organised a petition of 22,000 signatures gained in just six weeks in support of the hospital. This was presented in Parliament by Beckenham's MP Sir Philip Goodhart and the hospital survived.



Under the last Government's Local Initiative Finance Trust, the hospital was completely rebuilt and now as the Beckenham Beacon it will continue to comprehensive services to local residents, as it has done since its foundation in 1872.

2013 is the 60th Anniversary of the the Queen's Coronation. Eileen remembers the Coronation in 1953 very well. Her cousin, the bass, Frederick Dalberg, lived in Beckenham with her family in the early 1950's. He was chief bass at Covent Garden Opera and created the role of Sir Walter Raleigh in Benjamin Britten's opera *Gloriana*, performing before the Queen in the coronation performance.