

Herman Hermansen

b. Bergen, Norway ~ 1854 d. Wellington Hospital 27 Mar 1905

Herman arrived in Wellington in 1881. He may have started work at Wellington Hospital when it first opened in 1881 – he was certainly there in 1883. His initial position was that of Wardsman, Ward 1.

On 4 Mar 1884 he married one of the nurses, Elizabeth Cross. By 1885 he was employed as Dresser, a role that initially involved nursing of and the attention to the dressings of male patients. In July 1885 he requested an increase in his salary of £20 pa. However one month later he was, with a number of other staff, dismissed because of the signing of a protest letter concerning the dismissal of the RMO, Dr Maurice Chilton.

He was soon back on staff as Dresser and the increased salary he had earlier asked for was granted from January 1886. His wife Elizabeth was appointed matron in 1886 (ref. section on Matrons).

He suffered ill-health from July 1887, required surgery in October and a decision was made to withhold his salary from 1 November 1887. He was well enough to resume duties in 1888, on full pay from 1 June. Thereafter his duties seem to have been many and varied.



For a time he acted as porter and attendant in the operating

theatre. It is said that he would describe to other staff “the operations that Dr Ewart and me have just done”!

Newspaper reports in 1893 describe a Coroner’s Court hearing into the death of a patient. Herman had personally performed an autopsy, assisted by one of the honorary surgeons, and was required to testify in court what he had found.

In January 1898 his salary was increased from £120 pa to £150 pa. At a meeting of the Hospital Board one member is recorded as stating that “this servant of the institution was in all serious cases second only to the doctor.”

In February 1899 he was described as Dr Ewart’s assistant in the performing of X-Ray examinations.

He was forced to resign from the hospital in October 1903 due to recurrent ill- health. In July 1905 he was admitted with a serious illness, thought to be tubercular disease of a kidney. He required surgery from which he did not survive.

Footnote: Much of the work that Herman had done in his latter years at the hospital would subsequently become the responsibility of the house surgeon. The first house surgeon appointment at the Newtown Hospital was in 1903 with the arrival of Dr James S Elliott.