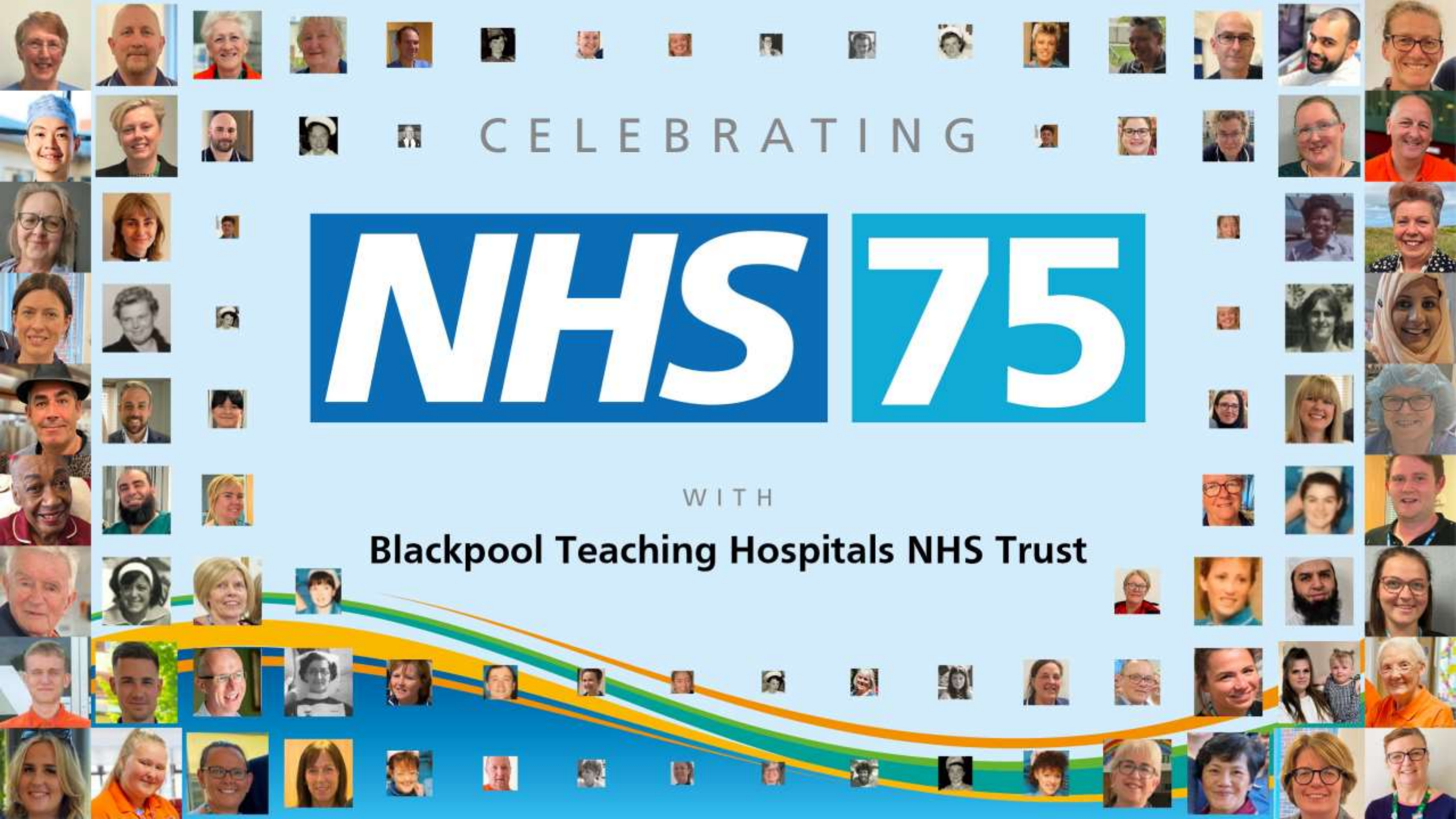


CELEBRATING

NHS 75

WITH

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust



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1. Delivered the day the NHS was born, where are these babies now?



The 1948 NHS babies

These three boys and three girls were the first babies to be delivered in hospital at Blackpool on the same day the NHS was born – Monday 5 July 1948.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals counted down the 75 days to the anniversary and this was the first story shared.

The “six darlings”, as the caption in the following day’s Evening Gazette put it, are from the left twins: Rita and Charles Evans (twins), David Tomlinson, Marcia Flavill, Allan Ward and Patricia Clayton.

A notice in the Gazette a few days later gives further details about baby Marcia: “On July 5 at Glenroyd, to Dorothy and Maurice Flavell, 36, Dutton Road, God’s gift of a daughter, Marcia. Both well.”

Holly Martinez, who is matron for today’s maternity service at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, said: “It must have been an amazing day for the parents to be the first to have NHS babies. It would be wonderful to hear any of these ‘babies’ now they’re all grown up!”

The babies were born at Glenroyd Maternity Home on Whitegate Drive which was the maternity unit for the town until 1975 when the service moved to Blackpool Victoria Hospital. Formerly a convalescent home for Co-operative Society members, Glenroyd was requisitioned for maternity care and run by Blackpool Corporation until the NHS took over in 1948.

2. Improved cancer care saved husband's life, says former clerical officer

Cancer care has changed radically since the NHS was founded in 1948 when few treatments beyond surgery and primitive radiation therapy existed.

But former Trust clerical officer Beverley Beaumont has seen for herself the big improvements since then. Husband John, who was an electrician for 13 years at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, was diagnosed this year with bile duct cancer which he's being treated for at Royal Preston Hospital.

But five years ago, he was diagnosed at Blackpool by Consultant ENT Surgeon Mr Ajay Nigam with an unrelated but very rare lymphoma.

"My mum went for treatment for cervical cancer at The Christie Hospital in Manchester 37 years ago but it was too late and there was nothing they could do," said Beverley.

"When I with John for his treatment, it was very different – so modern and so improved."

John was put on a clinical trial for a new drug which successfully put his lymphoma in remission.

"So many more treatments are available nowadays which wouldn't have been available years ago," said Beverley. "The NHS saved my husband's life."

Beverley started her NHS career in the late 1980s as an x-ray film night filer at the Vic. She then had a series of clerical officer jobs at the old Devonshire Road hospital, an elderly care mental health unit on Shorelands, Central Drive, and finally in medical records at Clifton Hospital, St Annes.

She retired in 2018 with John to look after him following his illness. Their daughter, Kerry, however, keeps up the NHS tradition and is a healthcare assistant at the walk-in centre on Whitegate Drive, Blackpool.



John and Beverley Beaumont

3. Lifetime Achievement Award for midwife with 53 years' service



Eileen Shaw receives her award from Trust CEO Trish Armstrong-Child

A midwife with 53 years of service in the NHS was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award as the service marks its 75th birthday.

Eileen Shaw was the unanimous choice of the judges for the prestigious title at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' annual Celebrating Success staff awards.

The NHS was only in its 21st year when she began her career as a student nurse in Northern Ireland in 1969 – before many of her current colleagues were even born.

She qualified as a midwife in 1973 and joined the team at Blackpool the following year.

Since then, she has been at the birth of hundreds of babies – sometimes helping deliver babies of women she delivered years earlier themselves.

Reflecting on her years of service, Eileen said: "I've learned to take every day as it comes, learn something each day from everyone, and then go home and reflect on what you've done. If you feel overwhelmed, speak to someone about it because we're all growing whether we're experienced midwives or new to the profession."

Chief Executive Trish-Armstrong Child said people like Eileen often had a record of achievement they didn't even realise.

"These are the sorts of people who will say 'oh, I was only doing my job'. But over the decades their care, kindness and professionalism touches the lives of countless patients and colleagues.

"This is the most humbling part of being in the service of the public in any role. Your kindness at a patient's greatest moment of need will be remembered by them, talked about and treasured long after it's faded from your memory."



4. Sixties nurses bop to The Beatles

It could be simply groovy being a Blackpool nurse back in the 1960s.

Unlike now, when most colleagues go home after a shift, nurses and doctors would live on site at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. Many of those buildings are now used for other purposes, including offices.

These four nurses are relaxing off-duty taking turns spinning some discs on portable record player.

A copy of The Beatles' first album, Please Please Me released in 1963, is on the mid-century coffee table in the foreground.

Second left is June Bayley (nee Thornton) whose daughter Jill Grugel is Materials Management Coordinator at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals for the NHS Lancashire Procurement Cluster.

She says the picture was taken in 1967 for a recruitment campaign in what her mum calls the day room of Home 15. June was a sister with the gastro team prior to retiring.



Nurses relax at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals in the sixties

5. Pandemic and drug therapy transform care for cystic fibrosis patients



Until very recently people with cystic fibrosis (CF) were not expected to live past the age of 20.

CF is a lethal genetic condition that causes thick mucus to build up in the lungs, digestive tract and other parts of the body but a new drug treatment is transforming the lives of 90 per cent of patients.

It is just one of the many transformative drug breakthroughs that have revolutionised care since the NHS was founded in 1948.

Nearly three-quarters of local patients with cystic fibrosis are also benefiting from home-monitoring of their condition thanks to the work of Blackpool Adult Cystic Fibrosis Service.

CF patients were particularly vulnerable to infection during the Covid-19 pandemic and often unable to leave their homes for medical appointments.

"We had to run video and telephone clinics instead of seeing people face-to-face," said Service Director Dr Tarek Saba, who leads the team. "These were very popular with patients – in fact, we had higher clinic attendances online that we had in-person before the pandemic.

"But the problem was we couldn't make the usual face-to-face observations which give us essential data about how patients' condition is progressing."

As Covid restrictions were lifted, Dr Saba's team were supported by the Trust's Clinical Quality Academy to work out how they could keep the convenience of remote care but restore the observations.

They did this by successfully applying for NHS community funding to pay for a range of clinical technology, such as diabetic sensors and blood monitors, which allow patients to monitor themselves at home and send the data to the CF team.

"We have nearly 75% of patients now doing their own monitoring," said Dr Saba.

Jamie has been a patient at Blackpool for many years. Pre-pandemic he regularly had to make a nearly 100-mile, inconvenient round trip from home to hospital for his check-ups. He says the pandemic changed all that and the new remote-monitoring service has allowed him to move away to Cambridge "but still keep the team at Blackpool caring for me and who know me so well".

Dr Saba added: "Patients like being in control and having a sense of ownership over their condition. It will be interesting to see over the longer term if this approach also improves patients' overall management of their condition.

"Covid was a terrible time for so many people but at least on this occasion some good has come of it – and with the new drug treatment patients can look forward to a much more normal life."

6. Kindness when my dad died inspired me to work in healthcare

As part of the NHS75 celebrations Trust colleagues, patients and our local community were asked to share their memories and stories about what the NHS means to them.

Healthcare Assistant Tanya Fairbrother recalls how the kindness of NHS staff when her dad died at the height of the first wave of Covid led to a job on Ward 24 at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

"At the beginning of Covid I lost my hero, my dad Jack Bentham. He went into hospital on 1 May 2020 and obviously we could not attend with him due to restrictions.

"The paramedics were lovely with both us. He entered A&E and obviously had to have a Covid test, the following day the result came back negative so he was transferred that afternoon to Ward 1.

"He had been on Ward 1 for less than 30 minutes and a healthcare assistant (HCA) recognised his breathing becoming laboured and knew he was close to the end.

"When I received the phone call to say he had passed away, we were in shock but the nurse in charge told us we could go up and spend some time with him and explained how the HCA had sat with him while he passed.

"From that moment on, as much as we were heartbroken, to know he had someone with him meant the world to us and helped our grieving process to know he wasn't alone.

"Although I don't know who this person was, I thought how lovely it must have been to be that person which in the long run was a support to our family.

"We have also been through a stillbirth tragedy in our family (my grandson) and all the staff were so lovely and understanding with all of us when this happened almost three years ago.

"When a post for an HCA was advertised, I felt that I would like to be that person for a family or to treat people in hospital as I would like my family to be treated and felt compelled to apply – and I love my job."



Tanya Fairbrother with her dad Jack Bentham

7. Community midwife says nursing changed her life forever

Nurses were often trained in the hospitals where they worked until relatively recently.

It was only in 2009 nursing became an all-degree profession, 90 years after the first State Registered Nurses qualified. Before that any hospital could set up a nursing school and choose their own – very variable – standards.

Catherine Anderton walked through the doors of Blackpool Victoria School of Nursing 38 years ago today “and my life changed forever”, she says.

“Nursing had been my dream and the next three years were some of the best of my life. Our nursing group laughed, cried and partied hard. I made friends that remain part of my life to this day.”

She went on to work as a staff nurse for two years before training to be a midwife in 1990. They were one of the final cohorts to train at Blackpool in what is now the colposcopy unit.

“The NHS and more importantly Blackpool has provided me with a career I love,” said Catherine.

“I worked as the community midwife in Fleetwood for 25 years caring for some of the most amazing families. These families gave me back far more than I gave them. I’m still working but now as a clinical governance midwife.

“Thank you NHS for giving me opportunity, passion, security, a future and a work family that I love dearly.”



Midwife Catherine Anderton (top row, third right)

8. Ward's 'mother hen' is Chief Executive's unsung hero



Carole Murphy receives her award from Trust CEO Trish Armstrong-Child

Nearly 75 years after being founded, the NHS is the world's fifth biggest employer – but retiring ward manager reckons it's the little things that count.

Carole Murphy was chosen from more than 60 nominations for the Chief Executive's Unsung Hero Award at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' Celebrating Success staff awards.

She said: "It has been an honour to spend my whole working career working alongside the most caring and compassionate people, who strive every day to make the NHS the best it can be for all no matter what their background is.

"And working for the NHS has taught me that the smallest things can make the biggest difference to patients and staff."

Presenting the award, Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child said Carole was someone who put her needs second to those of her team on the Surgical Assessment Unit at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

"She is her ward's 'mother hen', supporting their development with an amazing ability to ensure colleagues want to return to work with her again and again. She also went above and beyond in her support of a late, much-loved colleague."

Carole, who has worked for 20 years at Blackpool, including 13 on the Acute Medical Unit with eight as manager, retires next month.

She said: "I've had a fabulous career and worked with many marvellous people. It's a been a pleasure to see so many of them grow professionally and turn into wonderful nurses."

The Celebrating Success ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.

[You can relive the moment Carole won her award here.](#)

The runners up for the award were Ismail Dalal, Paediatric Diabetes Lead Nurse, and Dr Gareth Hardy, an Emergency Department and ICU consultant.



9. Couple marry in hospital chapel after cancer diagnosis



Leonie, Richard and their family

A couple married in the chapel at Blackpool Victoria Hospital after the groom was diagnosed with cancer.

Leonie and Richard Bromley, from Fleetwood, who have been together for nine years, always wanted to get married after meeting on a night out in Poulton.

Both were looking forward to organising a big celebration with all their friends and family at Marine Hall, Fleetwood, in July. Then in February, Richard received his diagnosis and, due to recent news following Rick's second round of chemotherapy, they quickly planned a more intimate ceremony.

With the help from ward staff, the couple received donations of food and decorations to help make the day special.

Leonie couldn't thank them enough: "We had the discussions with the registrar and chaplain on the Friday and married on the Sunday. It was so quick, and we can't thank everyone enough for what they did."

Joking as he looked back on the day, Rick said: "It was a relief it ended up being a small ceremony, I didn't stutter any of my words during the speech which would have been the case if we had done it in front of our 200 friends and family."

Leonie added it was the extra special adjustments to Rick's usually bare room that made her emotional.

"The Swan team and the staff on the ward surprised us by decorating Rick's room. They made a space so I could sleep overnight that was decorated with lights and banners – it was really cute. It was a special end to an emotional day."

Ana Goncalves, manager for Ward 3 where Rick is receiving treatment said: "Weddings in the hospital are not that common. In the 75th year of the NHS, this is a true example of how our

patients are at the heart of everything we do.

"Myself and colleagues on Ward 3 feel privileged to have played a small part in their special day."



Leonie and Richard Bromley

10. Victoria Hospital Angels play It's a Knockout

It's a Knockout was a hit BBC TV show that was in its heyday during the 1970s.

Teams representing their town or city completed tasks in absurd games, often dressed in large foam rubber suits (there was no internet then, kids).

This photograph captioned "It's a Knockout 1977" shows a team called the Victoria Hospital Angels, presumably made up of members of Blackpool hospital staff.

It's a Knockout made a number of visits to the Fylde coast over the years. It's not clear whether this team was competing in the TV series or a locally organised event.



The Victoria Hospital Angels about to take part in 'It's a Knockout' 1977

11. Proud to serve patients from behind scenes for 37 years



Carol Hodkinson at work

Hospital operations would grind to halt without the many skills of Carol Hodkinson and her colleagues in the Sterile Services team.

She has spent 37 years at Blackpool Victoria Hospital making sure every reusable surgical instrument and device is washed, disinfected, sorted, checked, boxed, wrapped and steam cleaned before being sent for use again.

"I didn't want to be a nurse when I left school but I did want to work in a hospital, and this is the job that came up," said Carol.

To begin with, she had a junior role preparing dressings and linens before being promoted to instrument sterilisation.

Carol says the fundamentals of the job have stayed the same over the years.

The team shares the various tasks across each shift to prevent fatigue. Sorting and checking instrument packs after they have been cleaned requires enormous concentration.

"The NHS has given me security. When people ask me what I do, I feel very proud to say I've been here so long."

12. Celebrating the Coronation on The Mall with memories



Sonia Khan

King Charles is nearly as old as the NHS being born in the November following the service's founding in 1948 – and two colleagues at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals will remember his Coronation for very different reasons.

Sonia Khan, lead pharmacist in the Trust's Community Frailty Service was a delighted and very surprised winner of tickets to the King's Coronation Procession.

She entered the NHS England ballot, joking to her family "I never win anything" before returning from leave to find the winner's email awaiting her. She explained: "I've never been someone who goes to concerts or big events – I'm so excited that I'll get to be a part of it."

Meanwhile, another colleague at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals has told of the "poignant" moment she received her OBE from King Charles III.

Dr Sharran Grey, Haematology Consultant Clinical Scientist, received her OBE from the then Prince of Wales in February last year. She received the honour after being recognised for services to blood transfusion and patient care.

She had been recognised in the 2021 New Year's Honours List but was unable to receive the OBE until a year later due to COVID restrictions. She attended a ceremony at Windsor Castle accompanied by her family including her husband, Dr Mark Grey, also a Consultant Haematologist.

Reflecting on the day, Dr Grey said: "You can't really believe it, it's such an unusual experience and was a really lovely day.

"Because the Queen had stepped back from some duties I didn't know who I would be receiving the honour from, whether it might

be the then Prince Charles, or perhaps William or Princess Anne. It's very poignant thinking about it now that six months later the Queen had sadly died and Charles would become King.

"Because of the COVID restrictions, I was only allowed to take my husband with me into Windsor Castle because they had cut back on the number of guests allowed. My family came with me on the trip which was lovely, but it was such a shame everyone couldn't experience the ceremony – it was absolutely amazing with an orchestra playing and such wonderful surroundings.

"It's a day I'll never forget."



Dr Sharran Grey

13. Sister's fundraising transforms ward in memory of patient Tom

Thousands of people have supported our hospital over the years raising money for our charity Blue Skies Hospitals Fund. Sometimes this is for fun and for others it can be in loving memory of someone they have lost.

As part of NHS75, we caught up with Becky Turner who to date has raised more than £25,000 for the Haematology Unit at Blackpool Victoria Hospital in loving memory of her brother Tom who lost his battle with leukaemia aged 29 in 2020.

Reflecting on those first 24 hours of Tom being admitted, Becky remembers how her brother expressed wanting to fundraise for the unit.

Several years later Tom's words are still having a lasting impact on both patients and their loved ones on the unit.

"As per Tom's wishes, we have enabled all of the patient side rooms on the haematology ward to be painted with beautiful murals including some places that were special to Tom such as Las Vegas," said Becky.

"We also paid for seven CADD pumps which will allow for

patients to safely administer their own chemotherapy in the comfort of their own homes."

She added: "Knowing that we are raising money for the ward that looked after Tom so brilliantly means a lot to us. He talked about fundraising often during his time in hospital and we are proud to be doing it in his name."

Jo Wilson, Haematology Ward Manager, said: "I was here when Tom was first admitted and have been on this journey with his family since. When I look back to how the ward felt and looked before the fundraising efforts, this must be marked as a milestone in our history. Now it is bright, fresh and a place that brings comfort to those who work here and visit as patients.

"The seven CADD pumps have revolutionised the way we operate on the unit, and it is not something we will forget."

Between 2019 and 2022, Blue Skies Hospitals Fund has invested nearly £1.5m of charitable funding into Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and this is one of many stories that has enhanced patient care.



Becky Turner with her brother Tom

14. Golden key unlocked royal opening of Blackpool Vic

With all eyes on the recent Coronation of King Charles III, we're looking back at the royal opening of Blackpool Victoria Hospital in October 1937.

The hospital had opened the previous year after moving from Whitegate Drive at a cost of £165,000 to build and equip. Work had started in November 1932 and patients from the old hospital were arriving by September 1936.

The honour of the official opening fell to King Charles' ancestor, George, Duke of Kent and fourth son of George V –with a ceremonial golden key provided by the architects to unlock the main entrance doors.

The ceremony at 4.30pm was part of a day of royal duties that started with "luncheon" at the Imperial Hotel, followed by the opening a new lifeboat house and an inspection of the newly-built North Promenade (works £155,200, land £8,800).

Pictures show the duke had time to visit some patients before officially switching on that year's illuminations at the town hall "by means of a special electrical device".

According to the borough's commemorative, gold-embossed royal programme, the illuminations were made up of 300,000 lamps at a cost of £70,000. More than two million visitors were expected to see them.

Covering five miles, the illuminations included a transformation of the Open Air Bath into a scene depicting Niagara Falls with 120,000 gallons of water cascading over the bath side each hour.

A keen airman, the duke died, aged 39, in 1942 when the RAF flight he was on crashed near Caithness in Scotland.



The Duke of Kent opens Blackpool Victoria Hospital

15. A&E nurse honoured with People's Health Hero Award



Lucy Cardwell receives her award

A nurse who helped a colleague in crisis was the winner of the People's Health Hero Award at Blackpool hospitals' annual Celebrating Success staff awards.

Advanced Clinical Practitioner Lucy Cardwell was on duty in the Emergency Department at Blackpool Victoria Hospital when a colleague and new mum arrived with her poorly baby.

In her nomination, the mum recalled how she arrived hysterical, running up to the first person she thought could help.

This person was Lucy who was "incredible from that very moment".

The new mum said: "Not only did my baby receive the most amazing care ... but so did I, which was going above and beyond what she had to do."

Deputy Chief Executive Steve Christian, who presented Lucy with her award, said her actions were in the very best traditions of the NHS which marks its 75th anniversary on 5 July.

"It's heart-warming to know that there are many people like Lucy here across the Trust when we need them," he said.

Lucy said: "I feel very privileged to work for the NHS. Being able to provide care and support for patients and relatives at their time of need is so important to me. The NHS gives patients the reassurance that the care they receive will be high quality and focused on them from the minute they step into the Emergency Department."

**CELEBRATING
SUCCESS** | THE BTH STAFF AWARDS
2023

NHS 75

16. 'If it wasn't for the NHS I wouldn't be here' says nurse

Visiting relatives in hospital as a child was the spark that led Andrea Goodey to choose a career in nursing.

"I visited Blackpool hospital a lot when I was young," she said. "The nurses were so kind and used to show me things – and I thought this is what I want to do."

Andrea did a pre-nursing course at Blackpool College before beginning her formal training at the Vic aged 19.

She enjoyed the camaraderie of "living in" at the hospital with fellow nurses and doctors. These were the days when nurses wore capes and hats which she remembers fondly. "It was hard work but worth it."

On qualifying, Andrea worked in A&E for eight years before embarking on a series of community roles including work with homeless families and young offenders. She is now a school nurse.

A degree in community practice from the University of Central Lancashire, funded by the NHS, helped her to secure more specialist roles.

"We are lucky to have the NHS and we need to make sure we keep and look after it," said Andrea.

A routine scan recently picked up a cancer for which she is now getting treatment, seeing care from a patient's perspective.

"If it wasn't for the NHS, I wouldn't be here," she said.



Audrey Goodey to the left of tutor Peter and her fellow new-starters in 1991

17. Wartime Fleetwood nurse started family NHS tradition



Zena's grandmother, Babara Bradshaw, is far right, middle row with glasses

These were some of the first nurses to serve in the NHS, according to Zena Bradshaw who is a Cardiology Research Nurse at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

She knows that because this lovely post-war photograph taken at Fleetwood Hospital is where Zena's grandmother, Babara Bradshaw, worked. She's far right on the middle row in glasses.

Babara started her training as a nurse towards the end of the second world war.

"Originally, she had to ask permission from her father to work," said Zena.

"He was very old fashioned and said that nursing was the only job that was appropriate for a woman. Luckily, she loved the job and continued it after the war days.

Zena added: "I know that her and my grandfather were courting while she was working at the hospital and he got shooed away more than once by 'a very cross sister'."

Babara passed away in 1997, aged 70, but two of her children had already gone on to become nurses. Zena's mum also became a mental health nurse at Moor Hospital, Lancaster.

18. Nursing was world of opportunity for Louise

Louise Dowell is proof that anything's possible in nursing as the Trust celebrated International Nurses Day in May and she looks forward to retirement.

The international celebration marks the birthday of Florence Nightingale who founded what we consider today to be modern nursing while a manager and trainer of nurses during the Crimean War, nearly 100 years before the NHS was founded.

Louise started her nurse training in 1987 and worked at several hospitals, including Leeds, Plymouth and Taunton. Along the way, she gained qualifications and experience in cardiac nursing which ultimately led to Blackpool's own highly regarded service in 2004.

Since moving to Blackpool, Louise has been clinical risk manager, head of occupational health, clinical governance lead for maternity and children's services, assistant divisional director of nursing and most recently Divisional Director of Nursing for the Families and Integrated Community Care.

Louise said nursing could be challenging but that she always felt supported when moving into senior roles, both by her managers and the teams that she has worked with.

A personal highlight was gaining a master's degree in law.

Louise on her coast-to-coast ride in 2014 "I am really proud of my nursing and academic achievements," she said. "Studying law while balancing home life and work challenges was not easy but I have always been supported by friends, family and colleagues."

Having a work life balance has been an important factor for Louise over the years and the flexible working of the NHS has allowed her to lead a fulfilling personal life as well as build a professional career.

"In 2014, I cycled across America from Virginia Beach on the east coast to Seattle on the west, over 4,000 miles in 52 days, averaging about 100km per day. We saw grizzlies, moose, wild turkeys, bison and much, much more! This is something I'll never forget."

Reflecting on her career ahead of her retirement in June, she said: "Nursing has many paths both within the hospital and community, you will meet so many people, learn so much and have the opportunity to experience a long and successful career."



Louise Dowell

19. Casualty register opens book on 1928 hospital patients



Dr Anthony Kearns

The dusty, leather-bound volume could be a Book of Spells straight from Harry Potter. In fact, the gold-embossed, red ledger is the Casualty Register for the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool.

It was unearthed by the hospital library and the first of 8,000 entries was made on 5 July 1928, 20 years to the day before the founding of the NHS, when 15-year-old Thomas was treated for a fractured nose. The final entry in August 1931 is for an injury to the fingers of 31-year-old "motor driver" Alex.

Typically, Blackpool hospital Emergency Department, the successor to the old casualty unit at Whitegate Drive, sees up to 250 patients a day. Our pre-NHS register shows it was a busy day if the number of patients ran into double figures.

Some of the injuries recorded reflect Blackpool's pre-eminence as a holiday resort such as when in May 1929 Mabel, aged 16, from Manchester was treated for being "kicked in the jaw by a mule".

Treatment and dressing of infected wounds is also a regular feature – a big concern at a time before antibiotics when even the smallest scratch could turn septic and even prove fatal.

The 1928-1931 Victoria Hospital Casualty Register

Other entries are more prosaic. Door attendant Frank, 50, needed an x-ray after being bitten by a cat.

Some injuries appear occupational such as butcher John, 25, who arrived with a hook in his hand while confectionery worker Vincent, 25, was burned on the neck with boiling sugar.

Dr Anthony Kearns, Emergency Department consultant at Blackpool hospital, said people were working more at risk with none of the health and safety precautions such as goggles and steel-capped boots we now take for granted.

"There were also lots more younger people being treated when many of the patients we see today are much more elderly," he said.

"This is an amazing find and is now firmly a part of the early history of emergency medicine on the Fylde coast and of the speciality as a whole."

20. World looks to NHS, says ex-Army nurse teaching lifesaving skills

Basic life support is a skill everyone who works for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals needs to know – and it's Sharon Ellis and her team's job to teach them.

Senior Resuscitation Officer Sharon has worked for the Trust for 22 years after training as a nurse in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

She was an Emergency Department nurse first before moving into practice development and then the resus team "but I've always taught resuscitation at varying levels and think it is a valuable life skill to learn".

"People's perception is that the job is all about rushing to emergencies but, in reality, a lot of the team's role is about teaching, and providing others with the skills they need for these situations," said Sharon.

"I find it very satisfying when people gain skills and can then use them outside clinical settings."

Reflecting on 75 years of the NHS, she says we're lucky to have it when you look at what happens abroad.

"The NHS is also very forward thinking and other countries look to us as leaders in healthcare because of that," she said.

Now try resuscitation yourself ...

[This Lifesaver interactive film](#) from the Resuscitation Council UK puts you at the heart of the action as someone suffers a cardiac arrest. You make the crucial decisions and learn the essential skills to save someone's life.



Sharon Ellis, Senior Resuscitation Officer

21. Cancer care innovation wins dermatology team award

Innovation has been at the heart of healthcare ever since the NHS was founded in 1948.

Pioneered in 1949, using an artificial lens to repair cataracts was one of the earliest with the first total hip replacement done at Wrightington, near Wigan, in 1962.

Today, at Blackpool's Clifton Hospital, a new approach to the diagnosis of suspected skin cancers is transforming care for patients there – and the dermatology team fought off competition from more than 100 nominations to take the title Clinical Team of the Year at this year's Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' annual staff awards.

Skin cancer teams nationally struggle to see all the patients who need care because of a national shortage of specialist clinicians.

Since January 2021, a medical photographer runs every clinic and is assisted by either a staff nurse or a health care assistant.

Patients with suspected skin cancer are photographed and the images are reviewed by the lead nurse or doctor within 48 hours. The images need to be of a high enough quality to enable diagnosis, and the medical photography team have worked with clinicians to ensure this.

Presenting the award, Executive Medical Director Chris Barben said: "Working together and thinking outside the box, the service now sees twice the number of patients it did before and is recognised nationally as an exemplar in their specialty."

The new process has also stopped the cancelling of other routine clinics.

Lead Nurse Jane Sanderson said: "Everybody has contributed to this award and it's been a whole team effort. We are the only Trust in Lancashire and South Cumbria meeting our targets and are getting a lot of recognition."

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 staff awards in a year. The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.

[Watch the moment it was revealed the team had won.](#)

The category runners up were Central West Community Therapy Team in Blackpool and the Same Day Emergency Care team at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.



Presenting the Clinical Team of the Year award



22. Band leader's spirit lives on after daughter donates piano



Volunteer Barry plays the piano on the Memory Corridor

A band leader's upright piano is bringing pleasure to a new audience at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

School music teacher Hughie Mett used the piano to work out arrangements for the Blackpool Jazz Orchestra which was well-known across the Fylde during the 1960s and 1970s specialising in the Glenn Miller big band sound.

His daughter, Melodie, was moved to donate it after reading the ancient instrument used to entertain patients on the Memory Corridor of the care for the elderly wards had tinkled its last tune.

"I had considered selling it but when I saw the story about the Memory Corridor, I thought 'that has to be it,'" she said.

Hughie, who played drums and vibraphone in the orchestra, was head of music at Fleetwood Grammar School, later high school following the amalgamation of the town's three secondary schools, until retiring in 1986. He died in 1993 following a cancer diagnosis, two hours after hearing a much longed for grandson, Alex, had been born.

Melodie said: "His piano had to go somewhere special because he was someone special. Now, the spirit of his music will live on."

... and here's hospital volunteer Barry Evans playing Hughie's piano for the first time on the Memory Corridor ahead of tuning.



Hughie Mett with his granddaughter in 1991

23. Blackpool ambulance calls record huge rise after NHS launch

The NHS was wildly more successful in the first year of operation than even its biggest champions could have dreamed.

So, perhaps unsurprisingly, Blackpool ambulances had their busiest month ever following the service's launch on 5 July 1948.

The Evening Gazette reported on 7 August that the six ambulances and one car made 756 journeys compared with 562 for June, covering 5,619 miles.

"One hundred and sixty-nine were accidents, 474 removals for sickness and 113 maternity cases ... there were 25 journeys with sitting patients – people who were attending the Victoria Hospital for massage and electrical treatment," recorded the front page report.

Today, the North West Ambulance Service responds to more than one million emergency incidents annually across the region and makes 1.3m patient transport journeys for people who require non-emergency transport to and from healthcare appointments.

The public's embrace of the new free-at-the-point-of-care service took the Government by surprise. Demand for dental and eye care was especially high. Within the first year, the NHS was also supplying 4,000 deaf aids a month with the number forecast to at least double.

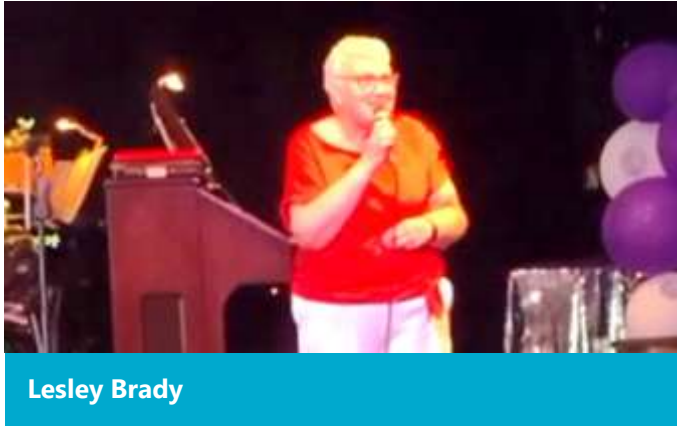
Minster of Health Aneurin Bevan told his colleagues in Cabinet in May 1949: "The fact is that the genuine need for these services was, and is, much greater than anyone knew, both the accumulated need of the past and the current need from day to day. This is not a 'luxury' demand like the rush for sweets; people do not apply for spectacles—still less visit the dentist or the hospital—unless they really think they need help."

Of course, this all came at a price. By the end of 1948, the cost of the new NHS was more than double the predicted budget of £176m, reaching around £400m.



A picture from the archives

24. Singing medical secretary celebrated NHS with David Essex



Lesley Brady

Lesley Brady helped celebrate in song with Seventies film and pop heartthrob David Essex when the NHS had a big birthday 25 years ago.

At the time, Lesley, who joined the haematology team at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals as an audiotypist four years ago, was known as the "singing medical secretary" at Royal Oldham Hospital.

"Having sent many a consultant on their happy way to retirement with a song, I was obviously delighted and honoured to be asked," she said.

The NHS 50th anniversary gala show at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in London, was organised by the Royal College of Midwives and Lesley Lee as she was then appeared with an NHS choir for the final number, Spread a Little Happiness.

"One of my memories of that night was David Essex praising the NHS as he had experienced the US following an accident to his daughter and he said we had the greatest health system in the world.

"As I am now in my 34th year of working for the NHS, it is still a memory I will treasure for ever and I'm still proud of our NHS despite all the problems we have incurred in the last few years."

Lesley started singing around the age of 30, having always enjoyed it but never having had the confidence to perform. She got her break while helping a friend at a club. No one was coming up to sing so he asked her to step in. Someone who booked acts on the Manchester club circuit heard her and a semi-professional singing career was born.

Her other claim to fame was singing with the Irish boy band Westlife. Her initial audition was down the phone but she made a shortlist of 120 from a list of 11,000 hopefuls.

"They wanted to do a swing number and needed someone older to sing with them," said Lesley. "I didn't get the job but the whole thing was filmed and they were absolutely brilliant."

Lesley's singing took a backseat for a number of years but she recently got a coach who's taking her to new places vocally.

She sings regularly at The Top Club in Cleveleys and is part of her coach's The Hope Choir in Blackpool. They plan to go singing in local care homes over the summer.

25. Patients welcomed into latest phase of £25m 'Emergency Village'



Treatment areas in the new development

Building a better hospital and improving services for patients has been a theme throughout the 75 years of the NHS at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

The Whinney Heys Road site is almost unrecognisable from the building the NHS took over in 1948 with many expansions and extensions such as the opening of the maternity unit in 1974, replacing Glenroyd on Whitegate Drive, to the opening of the £53m Lancashire Cardiac Centre in 2006.

More recently, the £25m development of an "emergency village" saw a new-build 16-bed Critical Care Unit and Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) unit opened in summer last year.

The first Emergency Department (ED) refurbishment phase opened last month with improvements that include the first 13 new individual majors cubicles with all the monitoring equipment to give safe and effective care, and two specially designed rooms for high-risk patients with mental health issues. The refurbishment continues with a further nine majors cubicles due for completion in July.

There is also now in use a home for the new CT scanner and three x-ray rooms dedicated to supporting ED flow with plain film x-ray, chest x-ray and specialist CT cone beam capacity.

The move to this new Assessment A space is allowing further improvements which will be further supported by a six-bay resuscitation area, relative support accommodation and a rapid assessment and triage unit that will double current capacity. It is expected that the complete ED refurbishment will be fully operational by Christmas.

General X-Ray Manager Jo Peacock said: "It's very exciting for us as a team. We have taken every step to provide excellent quality imaging to aid fast accurate diagnosis for patients, but also with the health and safety of our staff in mind.

"We have also bought a state-of-the-art dental kit and are one of the very few hospitals in the country to have this cone beam CT. This will aid maxillofacial doctors with diagnosis without the patient having to undergo a high-dose CT imaging. It allows the radiographers to undertake 2D and 3D facial and dental images using low doses to safeguard patient health."



The first refurbished part of the Emergency Department

Sarah Senior, Acting Managing Director of Atlas, which has managed the scheme, added: "Atlas is privileged to continue to work alongside the clinical teams in the delivery of the Emergency Village project. As we hand each phase of the development over to the Trust, you can see the final picture forming as each element comes together to create a state-of-the-art facility fit for modern emergency care."

26. Fundraising down the decades

The annual Dragon Board Festival at Fairhaven Lake, Lytham St Annes, organised by our Blue Skies Hospital Fund, reminds us how important fundraising for the NHS has always been.

Last year, Blue Skies donated £500,000 towards a new CT scanner at Blackpool Victoria Hospital thanks to the generosity of thousands of local people.

It's was a gift of the latest medical equipment that follows a long tradition, such as this presentation of a baby monitor to the hospital in 1969 ...



... and sponsored fundraising events have always been popular such as this one for an earlier scanner appeal in 1987 involving the then Ward 3 ...



Fundraising was even more important in the days before the NHS was founded on 5 July 1948 when either you had to pay for your care or it was at least partly covered by hospital grants from the local authority or charity fundraising.

Here's Mr E. Smith, president of the Burnley and District Association, presenting a cheque to Mr W. H. Smith, superintendent of Blackpool Victoria Hospital in 1938 at the association's annual whist drive at Booth's Cafe, although it seems lady secretary Mrs B. Riley is the only one enjoying herself...



... and having a jolly good time are a band of 11 nurses who make up The Astorians. The sheet music on the piano is Little White Lies, a popular song first recorded in 1930, and the nurses are raising money for the planned Victoria hospital at the then Whinney Heys Hall opened in 1936.



For more information on the work of hospital charity Blue Skies, [click here](#).

27. Diary inspires book to help women living with breast cancer



Author Carole Paterson

Carole Paterson turned the trauma of a cancer diagnosis into a book to help other people coping with the disease.

She had been benefiting from NHS monitoring of a lump for 20 years when it suddenly became very painful while driving in 2019.

Carole, from St Annes, was quickly diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer which affects just 15% of patients – it was only a matter of a week since she had been made redundant from her job in public relations and marketing.

She was fast-tracked to treatment at Blackpool Teaching Hospital where chemotherapy shrank the tumour by nearly two-thirds over the next 18 weeks, followed by a lumpectomy and radiotherapy treatment. Prior to having chemotherapy, Carole had been told that she would probably need a mastectomy.

"I was then fortunate enough to be offered a place on a clinical trial for a new immunotherapy drug. That involved being given the drug intravenously every two weeks for a year. I am still being carefully monitored as part of the programme trial, which is really reassuring," she said.

Three years following her diagnosis, Carole published a book about her experience, *Tit's Up – A Journey Laid Bare*.

"The book came about from a diary I kept. One of the breast care nurses suggested that it was a good idea to keep one through your illness so you can look back and see the progress you've made," she said.

"In the beginning, I couldn't talk to anyone about my diagnosis or the treatment. I'd get too emotional because I was incredibly scared. The books I'd tried to read were all too clinical, so all they did was intensify my fears. So, I wrote the book as an honest day-by-day account of my experience from day one.

"I've not made light of the treatment or the disease, but I've tried to write it in a conversational style that is easy to read. When funny things happened, I wrote about those too, because I wanted to keep the book balanced and I wanted it to reflect me as a person.

"I'm a naturally positive person and I found that having a positive attitude helped me enormously. I would say that the main messages in the book are to try and stay positive and stay connected. I started painting again with an online art group and it was great to feel connected and to switch off from the treatment for a while.

"I hope my book will help patients, their families, carers and friends understand what their treatment plan might entail, and what it's like to be a cancer patient. I hope it will also be of interest to anybody who just wants to know a little more about what it is like to get a cancer diagnosis and go through treatment."

Proceeds from the book sales have raised £1,300 for cancer charities so far.

The immunotherapy trial Carole benefited from is one of the many major developments in NHS breast cancer care over the past 75 years.

In the 1980s, the impact of anti-oestrogen drugs on the progress of breast cancer was shown in the first clinical trials. A huge breakthrough was the testing of tamoxifen, an anti-oestrogen therapy taken in the form of a tablet that reduced the risk of breast cancer deaths by almost one-third.

In 1988, free breast screening was started in a world first by the NHS to reduce breast cancer in women over 50.

28. Family's praise for midwife who won compassion award

A bereaved family's praise won a midwife an award for her compassion and caring at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' annual staff awards.

Laura Walsh, who is a specialist midwife in the Swan End of Life and Bereavement Team, supported mum Amanda Partington after she lost twins in 2021.

She then went on to support her through the worries and anxieties of another pregnancy, helping safely deliver son Theo.

Nominating Laura for the Compassion in Action Award, Theo's grandma, Julie Partington said: "She went above and beyond in her job and has so much compassion. She listens to her patients and has a calming nature which in difficult times is reassuring. I can't thank her enough. She is a very special lady."

Laura said she felt "very, very blessed to look after the families that I do" and have such an impact on people's experiences of care. She also paid tribute to all the colleagues who supported her in her work.

[Watch the moment the winner was revealed.](#)

The runners up were Julie Lucas, a Head and Neck Cancer Support Worker, and Louise Smith, an Advanced Clinical Nurse Practitioner.



Laura Walsh receives her Celebrating Success Award



29. Innovation puts artificial eye team's focus on the future



One of the service's craftspeople

The ancient craft of making artificial eyes is being transformed with 21st century technology thanks to the NHS's expert team at Blackpool.

The earliest known eyes created nearly 4,000 years ago in Iran using gold but it was the glass blowers of late 16th Century Venice who crafted the first recognisably modern ones. Today's eyes are made from acrylic plastic.

Now the technicians and craftspeople at the National Artificial Eye Service at Bristol Avenue are developing new approaches to manufacturing and colour matching prostheses for people who have lost an eye through either disease or accident.

Traditionally, the image of the eye is painted on the artificial eyeball by an artist using pattern matches provided by an ocular prosthetist caring for the patient at one of the service's 50 clinics.

But ocular technicians Quinton Rae and James Goodbarn have developed the technology to create high quality photographs of the patient's eye that precisely replicate the required detail.

Operational Manager Nigel Bennett said: "It's surprisingly difficult to take a colour-accurate photograph of the eye but with a lot of effort we've managed to achieve it.

The studio at the National Artificial Eye Service in Blackpool where the prostheses are created.

"Using this new equipment and technique helps the team member creating an eye better connect to the patient because they're now working with a true-to-life image of a patient's real eye."

The technique has been rolled out to 30 clinics so far with the ambition to use it for the more than 3,500 eyes the service creates each year.

Further innovation includes experiments with 3D printing technology to create the artificial eyeball the image is painted on.

Production Manager Ken Barratt said: "We have always had excellent feedback from our patients about the high quality of our manufactured eyes and how realistic they are. However, we are constantly working on new ways to make our eyes even more lifelike includes working with new technology."

The National Artificial Eye Service began life as the Army Spectacle Depot during the First World War but quickly changed from vision correction to supplying artificial eyes to servicemen injured on the frontline. It continued to serve only the armed forces until the creation of the NHS in 1948 when specialist treatment was extended to all qualifying patients.

Today, the service is hosted by Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

30. Bella Ellis, 5, goes into remission



Bella Ellis with her mum Britney

Bella Ellis, aged five, rang the Children's ward 'End of Treatment Bell'

Joined by her mum Britney and little sister Daisy, Bella proudly rang the bell three times to mark a key milestone in her cancer treatment, as she is now in remission.

First diagnosed at the age of two, mum and Bella would travel between Manchester and Blackpool on a weekly basis for treatment. Bella grew particularly fond of play specialist Roz, who made her time in Blackpool Victoria Children's Unit positive and less scary. Mum commented, "she loves coming here, she sees it as a place she can play and loves spending time with the staff."

The team on the unit clapped and marked this special moment with Bella and her family as they will now see her on a less regular basis.

The Children's ward 'End of Treatment Bell' has been used less than a dozen times since it was donated in September 2020 by Skye Brierley who was aged seven when she also went into remission.

31. Let's party ... keeping entertained from wartime to Swinging Sixties



Say what you like but healthcare staff have always known how to party – as these archive photographs both before and after the founding of the NHS 75 years ago in July 1948 show ...

In the first picture, there was a circus theme for the Christmas concert at the Vic in 1952 – Queen Elizabeth II had succeeded to the throne 10 months earlier.



Hitler's domination of Europe was almost complete when our second photograph was taken at a Victoria hospital staff dance in 1940 – with the direction to the air raid shelter clearly posted. Only Churchill's Britain stood in the dictator's way but this happy bunch are casting off their concerns for one night at least ...



The third photograph was captioned "staff dance Glenroyd, Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Moss Side at the Winter Gardens".

32. The reunion: 'If I could do it all again, I would in a heartbeat'



The friends in 2023

For those working in the NHS, the organisation is often seen as a family, with lifelong friendships developing in a fast-paced environment dedicated to supporting people at what is sometimes their most difficult time.

This was never truer than for a group of friends who reunited at Blackpool Victoria Hospital recently, four decades after qualifying as nurses.

On the year of the 75th birthday of the NHS, the 14-strong group of friends – one of whom had travelled 10,000 miles from Australia – got together at the hospital to reflect on just how much the NHS has changed.

Among the friends was Jo Lickiss, the former Divisional Director of Nursing for Surgery, Anaesthetics, Critical Care and Theatres.

Jo worked for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals since she started her training at the organisation's School of Nursing (now the Trust's Education Centre) on 3 January 1983. During the following years she worked in a number of roles within the surgery and outpatients teams, including as a staff nurse in ENT (ear, nose and throat) and Ophthalmics before becoming a ward manager in 1997.

Later on she became Nurse Consultant for Infection Prevention in 2007, and Divisional Director of Nursing in 2017 until her retirement from nursing in 2022.

During her time, Jo reports that among the biggest changes she saw was the expansion of the hospital itself, but one thing has remained constant – the commitment by colleagues to provide healthcare with care and compassion.

Jo added: "I have thoroughly enjoyed working for the NHS, it has been very rewarding and the people I have met throughout my career have shaped me as a nurse. There have been hundreds of highlights and stories, too many to recall, however what I can say is that I am very proud to be a nurse and if I could do it all again, I would in a heartbeat."



Training at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Also attending the reunion was Jackie Riedel, who worked the hospital until 2004 in various staff nurse and research roles within cardiac and medical teams. She even met her husband, who worked with the ambulance service, while working on Ward 21 in 1987 and gave birth to two children in the Women's Unit.

Jackie said: "I've met many wonderful colleagues over the years and seen the hospital develop and emerge into a modern, very busy place. Even though many of us moved out of Blackpool, my path crossed with various individuals and I now regularly use the Rheumatology outpatient service and am grateful for their support."

33. 'There's never been a day I didn't want to come to work'



Robert Ward

Working for the NHS is a world of opportunities as nurse Robert Ward's career shows.

He qualified as a registered mental health nurse in 1987, working at Blackpool Victoria Hospital's psychiatric unit, later known as Parkwood and now demolished.

Robert then took advantage of an 18-month post-registration course to become a registered general nurse. Blackpool was one of the few hospitals at the time to offer this opportunity.

"But by the time I qualified – and hard as it is to believe now – there were too many nurses being trained and not enough jobs, so I had to go back to mental health nursing," he said.

What followed were spells in Parkwood as both a staff nurse and ward manager and working as charge nurse at Lancaster Farms prison for young offenders.

By the year 2000, Robert's career took a new turn as he became involved in nurse recruitment and retention, including encouraging colleagues who had left the profession to return to practice, and establishing a Health and Social Care Cadet Scheme which is still now running today under an apprenticeship programme. That was followed by nine years as the Mental Capacity Act Lead at the hospital until his retirement in 2020.

Robert: 'I've had a terrific 40 years with the NHS'

But the Covid pandemic drew him back to the Vic where he became clinical lead for the vaccine roll out as well as supporting the staff flu campaign.

"I've had a terrific 40 years with the NHS – there's never been a day I didn't want to come to work," said Robert.

"I got a lot of satisfaction from the recruitment and retention role, bringing on the next generation even at the times when they didn't think they could do it."

Robert, like his wife Kim who retired from the Vic in the spring, hasn't quite settled into retirement. He is now a HIV Nurse gives HIV care three days a week with Blackpool Sexual Health Service. Kim is an advanced nurse practitioner now working part-time in pre-operative assessment.



Robert and colleagues earlier in his career

34. Day-old NHS saved Marcia's mum and dad £9 in hospital fees



Baby Marcia with her mum, Dorothy

Having a baby in the days before the NHS was an expensive business if you had to go to hospital – which is why more than half the children born before 1948 were delivered at home, often by midwives employed by a local authority or nursing association.

Typically, the price of a home delivery was one shilling and sixpence (the equivalent of seven-and-a-half pence today).

So, it was good news for the parents of Marcia Roper that she was one of the first babies to be born in hospital at Blackpool the day the NHS was founded in July 1948. She was born at 3.30am and spent eight or nine days in hospital.

A notice in the Blackpool Evening Gazette a few days later read: "On July 5 at Glenroyd, to Dorothy and Maurice Flavell, 36, Dutton Road, God's gift of a daughter, Marcia. Both well."

"The NHS meant a lot to my mum and dad," said Marcia, from Poulton-le-Fylde. "It would have cost £9 to have a baby in hospital. I can't remember if mum said I was early or late but the midwife would tell her to hang on for the NHS!"

Marcia became a teacher and taught at Layton Primary School, Blackpool. She resumed her career after taking a break to bring up a family, later teaching and becoming headteacher at Weeton St Michael's primary school, near Blackpool. She was also Justice of the Peace in the town for 26 years.

Her husband Geoffrey is a former chair of Lancashire County Council, served as county councillor for Poulton for nearly 30 years and on Wyre Borough Council for 17 years. Marcia says she was "privileged and honoured" to be Mayoress of Wyre and the county's Chairman's Lady.

Marcia said: "We are very fortunate to have the NHS. It is a wonderful thing."



Marcia Roper, born the day the NHS was founded

35. Award 'massive boost' for Children's Speech and Language team



The team receives their award

The team, which is based across Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre, took top prize in the Research, Quality and Innovation Award at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Celebrating Success staff awards.

A scarcity of appropriately trained staff as well as the impact of the Covid pandemic meant the team was facing significant challenges providing the right support for patients.

But they turned the service around using research to better understand their waiting lists as well as innovating to deliver a better, more accessible service in places that best suit their patients.

Director of Corporate Governance Esther Steel, who presented the award, said: "They've thought creatively about recruitment, creating a virtual workforce of colleagues across the country – and even one in Germany. And by changing how they work, they've reduced waiting times for appointments by a third and cut 52-week waits by nearly 90%. Just incredible."

Team leader Sarah Sutcliffe said: "The team have worked very hard to reduce our waiting lists and offer innovative evidence-based ways to support the children and young people within our service.

"We are immensely proud of winning the award and even prouder of how far we have come in 18 months. Meeting Esther and getting recognition from the Trust for the team's hard work in driving the service forward is wonderful."

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 annual staff awards in a year which marks the service's 75th birthday on 5 July. The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.

[Watch the moment the team learned they'd won the award.](#)

Twenty-seven nominations were received for the award and the runners up were the Bladder and Bowel Team and the Medchart Team.



36. My Mercedes helped me walk again – with a little help from the NHS



Keiran Morgan behind the wheel

Critically ill in hospital, Kieran Morgan's chances of surviving were "truly worse than terrible" but one thing kept him going.

It was the thought of restoring and getting behind the wheel of his newly bought 1999 Mercedes C-Class saloon.

Kieran, from Poulton-le-Fylde, was receiving treatment for rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease when immunosuppressant therapy he was receiving went catastrophically wrong.

"Basically, my immune system was wiped out," he said. "I was rushed to hospital and the only option was to sedate and fully ventilate me.

"It was only thanks to the incredible talents and unmovable determination of the staff who never gave up on me that I survived – and not only that but taken off ventilation which had initially been considered impossible."

Kieran, 41, who was studying law at Liverpool John Moores University when he fell ill in 2014, slowly but steadily improved over three months in hospital.

He was advised to find a goal to focus his rehabilitation on, so the self-confessed "mad car enthusiast" had a picture of his battered Mercedes pinned by his bedside.

"My goal was not just to be able to drive it but be healthy enough to restore it too," said Kieran.

"I went on to beat the persistent clinical expectation that I would never walk again – and I even went on to get my race driving licence which I achieved at Silverstone."

Kieran now walks unaided, has restored his Mercedes and hopes to return to studying law one day.



Kieran Morgan and his restored Mercedes

"I also want to thank the hospital chaplaincy team. They were especially supportive to my close family and particularly at very worst moments I was in intensive care."

He added: "Nelson Mandela once said 'it's only impossible until it's done', and the Blackpool intensive care team at the time epitomised this with me."

37. Peter leaves legacy of learning to generation of nurses



Caroline Costello

Nursing is very much a family affair for Caroline Costello whose mum and dad met at Blackpool Vic, fell in love and made their careers there.

Peter Cardew was the tutor pictured with a class of 1991 at the old hospital nursing school submitted to our NHS75 archive by his former student Andrea Goodey.

"You've made my day putting this picture on your page," said Caroline, an Enhanced Recovery Nurse who will qualify as an advanced clinical practitioner this year.

"My lovely dad worked for the Trust for many years and inspired me to progress in my career in nursing as well as many others who work here."

Peter and his future wife, Christine, who recently retired as a practice nurse, met more than 45 years ago in the old hospital halls of residence.

"I remember being handed over from the parent who was on days to the one who had just finished nightshift. I can still remember the smell of disinfectant while walking the corridors in my pyjamas!" said Caroline.

Peter worked in A&E, coronary care, AMU and the old ward 22 before becoming a tutor. He later left to lecture in counselling and psychotherapy at the University of Central Lancashire.

"He continued to do bank shifts as he felt it gave him an opportunity to continue teaching the nurses of today," said Caroline.

Sadly, Peter died shortly after retiring in 2021 from pancreatic cancer, aged 60.

"He is sorely missed but remembered fondly by many of the senior nurses today," said Caroline.



Tutor Peter Cardew in a photo supplied by then student nurse Andrea Goodey

38. Sixties mark era of expansion and modernization at Vic



The Central Sterile Supply Department

The great and the good gathered at Blackpool Victoria Hospital on 29 January 1965 for the grand opening of a new operating theatre and sterile supplies department.

The £132,000 building costs [described in the event's glossy programme and brochure](#) was among the first phase of works to transform the Vic into a district general hospital.

DGHs, as they would become known, were part of Minister of Health Enoch Powell's 1962 "Hospital Plan" which proposed the development of 90 hospitals and the upgrading of another 134.

The new operating theatre would help meet the rising demand for surgery which had grown from 7,195 operations in 1950 to 13,515 by 1964. Last year, the hospital performed 17,005.

By 1966, the Hospital Plan had paid out £578,547 for new nurses' accommodation and training school, and new outpatient, casualty, physiotherapy and rehabilitation departments (£447,184).

Powell's was a 10-year plan but, perhaps predictably for such a huge programme, a new maternity unit to replace Glenroyd maternity hospital on Whitegate Drive and anticipated for 1967, was delayed. It finally opened in 1974.

Much of the 1960s developments have since been repurposed or superseded by new buildings but the Central Sterile Supply Department team still works from the 1965 site. A plaque commemorating the unveiling by Sir James Lythgoe, Chairman of the Manchester Regional Hospital Board, can still be seen on the main hospital corridor.

Much-modernised over the years, the principles of sterilisation and even the function of the equipment used today would be familiar to the staff of 60 years ago.

Surgical instruments and devices are still washed, disinfected, sorted, checked, boxed, wrapped and steam cleaned before being sent for use again.

In fact, some of the instruments, such as steel scalpel handles, can stay in use for decades and may have even been in use when the department originally opened.



Theatre staff prepare to receive patients

39. Life with the NHS is a family affair for the Finches



Ward 15 colleagues with Irene (third from right) in the Isle of Man

Irene Finch worked 25 years at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals but like many colleagues three family members are keeping up the tradition of service to the NHS.

She started at Blackpool Victoria Hospital as a domestic in 1978 before becoming an auxiliary nurse in the 1980s.

Retiring in 2003 Irene, now aged 81, worked on the geriatric ward, Ward 23 and Ward 15 before finally moving to gastro and critical care. She also found time to be a union steward.

"I loved it here, it was the camaraderie, the company and also the parties and I still go the social events and reunions," she said.

Irene still has a huge box full of photographs from her at the Vic and remembers all the names of colleagues from days gone by. In one picture, she is with with colleagues on a 1987 social trip to the Isle of Man from Fleetwood. The back of the photo reads "Fun Boat – All very seasick – Ward 15".

Irene's daughter-in-law Amanda is the Senior Clinical Trial Coordinator in Research and Development where her son, Michael, and daughter Katie are administrators.

Amanda has worked at the Vic for almost 20 years having started in Medical Records, moving to the Cancer Research Network Centre in Preston and returning as a senior clinical trials coordinator.

Ward 15 colleagues with Irene (third from right) in the Isle of Man

She said: "The time that most sticks in my mind is when we were doing the Covid vaccines in the early days and how it really brought everybody together as a team."

Of her more recent memories, Amanda took part in the Blue Skies Hospital Fund Dragon Boat race which was "absolutely brilliant" despite the boat capsizing and the whole team tipping into Fairhaven Lake.

Son Michael also started in R&D medical records and also works part-time at Blackpool Football Club after completing his BSc studies.



Amanda, Michael, Katie and Irene Finch

Katie has been at the Vic for three years, starting as bank staff to help with the vaccine studies and then in R&D medical records before getting a permanent role. She is now studying for a qualification to complement additional finance roles in R&D.

On 5 July as we mark the 75th anniversary of the NHS, Katie will also be celebrating her birthday. Many happy returns to us all!

40. Volunteers' Week: a picnic in the park

Volunteers are part of everyday life at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, giving their time to help and support patients, visitors, and staff in many ways.

For 12 years the Trust's chief executives have hosted a special thank you event to coincide with the national Volunteers Week event, but due to COVID and restrictions the event was moved from the restaurant at Blackpool Victoria Hospital to Stanley Park.

Following the success of the event last year Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child, accompanied by executive colleagues, once again hosted a picnic in the park at the famous band stand for 2023's celebrations.

This year the event coincides with celebrations marking the 75th year of the NHS and is an opportunity to reflect on the work that has been done by volunteers for so many decades, making a difference to patients and colleagues alike.

The Trust has more than 265 active volunteers at Blackpool Victoria and Clifton hospitals, each giving at least three hours of their time a week. Volunteer Manager, Catherine Henshaw said the event is an opportunity to celebrate, "Not only is this event about recognising our current volunteers and saying thank you but it also raises the awareness of volunteering and the many reasons people choose to volunteer for us."

Vera volunteers in both the Blue Skies shop and handing out the breakfast in the Emergency Department. When she first started volunteering a few years ago it was in loving memory of her mum who always appreciated the those who gave their time to give out the teas to patients.

Vera continues to volunteer now for her own physical and mental wellbeing, "As a retired nurse I've always wanted to continue to help people, and this is a great way to do that whilst staying fit. I love that I can support the charity and help patients"

Also at the event were duo Elaine and Pat who both met as volunteers 12 years ago and have been friends ever since. "We make the effort now before our shift to meet in the restaurant and have an hour to catch up, you'd never think we would be friends, but we just are now it is lovely." Both have worked a number of volunteer roles but enjoy the shifts they work together the most.

Speaking about the thank you event, Trish Armstrong-Child said: "This genuinely is one of the highlights in my annual calendar, I am always really humbled when I speak to our volunteers at this event how selfless and dedicated they are to making a difference.

"During my 30-year career at the NHS there has not been a role I have worked in that wasn't supported and touched by volunteers. This event is my small way of saying thank you for everything they do."

Volunteers Week is held every year as a celebration of the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering in their communities.

[Click here to see current vacancies open on our website](#) for specific volunteer roles. Alternatively, if you would like to have an informal conversation with the team please call 01253 957994 or email bfwh.volunteers@nhs.net



BTH volunteers gather for a picnic in the park

41. 'Giving something back' wins Steve volunteer award



Steve Dyson receives his award from Janet Barnsley

Two episodes of bowel surgery inspired Steve Dyson to become a volunteer at Blackpool Victoria Hospital and "give something back".

"Volunteering has changed my life for the better," he said. "I've made so many new friends. It's given me so much confidence. It's given me a new lease of life really."

Steve's volunteering as a navigator and a patient listener was recognised with the top prize in the volunteers' category at Celebrating Success 2023, this year's Blackpool Teaching Hospitals staff awards.

Presenting the award, Janet Barnsley, Executive Director of Integrated Care, said: "Nothing is too much trouble for Steve who's super-cheerful and a pleasure to be around."

"It's his experiences as a patient that gives him common ground with other patients, allowing them to open up and trust him with their worries and fears."

Steve's volunteering has also helped him on to the hospital bank of casual staff as a healthcare assistant.

"I can't thank the Vic, the Trust enough for giving me the opportunity to volunteer. The volunteers are all winners," said Steve.

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 Blackpool hospitals annual staff awards in a year which marks the service's 75th birthday on 5 July. The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.

[Watch when Steve received his award.](#) The runners up were the Catherine Harrington and Susan Lawlor.

... would you like to volunteer with Steve too?

Volunteers are part of hospital life at Blackpool, giving their time to help and support patients, visitors and staff in many ways.

The Trust has more than 450 active volunteers at Blackpool Victoria and Clifton hospitals, each giving at least three hours of their time a week.

[Speak to our volunteer manager Catherine Henshaw to find out more.](#)

[These are our current vacancies.](#)

CELEBRATING
SUCCESS | THE BTH STAFF AWARDS
2023

42. Clifton 'Friends' follow in footsteps of first NHS hospital volunteers



Getting ready for the League's Coronation party at Clifton Hospital

A League of Friends became a familiar sight at hospitals in the years following the creation of the NHS in July 1948.

And it was at the former Lytham Hospital in Fylde where one of the first of them led the way before of the establishment of a national Friends movement in 1949.

Friends groups come in all shapes and sizes but their primary purpose is to fundraise and provide the "nice to haves" for both patients and staff that were not the hospital's priority areas for spending.

Lytham Hospital closed in 2007 but the work of the Friends continues at nearby Clifton, which is part of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

Linda Beddows joined the Friends when the hospital opened in 1988. She now chairs the group and is keen to recruit new volunteers to keep their good work going.

"We must have raised hundreds of thousands of pounds over the years," said Linda, a retired recruitment consultant.

The Friends have supported the redecoration of the hospital garden room, including new blinds, which itself was originally funded and furnished by the Friends cost of more than £100,000. They have also provided a portable sound system for taking around the wards, track suits as a substitute for hospital gowns for patients going for treatment and hope to raise even more funds at a summer fair.

"We're always on the look-out for sponsors too. We spend £2,000 a year on newspapers for patients and it would be marvellous if someone could support that," said Linda.

"Clifton is our community hospital so, if you would like to give something back, volunteering is a great way to do it. The hospital staff are wonderfully supportive.



Linda Beddows

"We can customise volunteering roles to people's strengths and availability – some people like working behind the scenes, as it were, rather than being 'front of house'. Many hands do make light work."

Call 07518 782365 if you would like to learn more about volunteering with the Friends.

43. NHS fundraisers and volunteers keep up charitable tradition



The last meeting of the Victoria Hospital Ladies' Linen Guild

Health care before the NHS was unimaginably different to how it is today.

Not only did you usually have to pay for care but the treatments on offer were very limited. More often than not, pain and discomfort were accepted as part of life to be endured with stoicism.

Hospitals supported themselves with money from charity, hospital savings schemes, fees from those who could pay and from local authority grants.

All that changed in England and Wales on Monday 5 July when the NHS came into being for the 1,143 voluntary hospitals with some 90,000 beds and 1,545 municipal hospitals with about 390,000 beds.

Instead of charity, the NHS was paid through taxation at a cost of around £400m in the first year. Today the NHS budget is £153 billion.

Hospitals had long been the focus for local charities and good works to fund the basics of care but the NHS seemed to mean they were no longer needed.

Blackpool's Evening Gazette reported on 7 July 1948 the winding up meeting of the Blackpool Victoria Hospital's Ladies Linen Guild. They agreed to spend their last £227 on 75 pairs of sheets and 24 dozen pillowcases. The guild had been established 41 years previously and completely equipped the new Victoria hospital with linen in the five years from its opening in 1936.

Meanwhile, in Thornton Cleveleys, the Hospital Ladies' Committee held their final meeting in Stanley Hall.

Member Mrs R. O. Nickson MBE proposed the £50 balance in their bank book be divided equally between Blackpool, Fleetwood and Rossall hospitals for "Christmas comforts".

"This was passed unanimously," the Evening Gazette reported on Wednesday 13 July.

The early closures proved premature as the League of Friends started at Lytham Hospital a few months after the NHS's founding proved.

As the NHS looks forward to marking its 75th birthday, many hospitals continue to benefit from the work of their own charities, like Blue Skies Hospital Fund here at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, the goodwill and fundraising of the local community as well as the hugely valued contribution of their volunteers.

Keep up the tradition ... would you like to volunteer with us?

The Trust has more than 450 active volunteers at Blackpool Victoria and Clifton hospitals, each giving at least three hours of their time a week.

44. Frankie brings doggy cheer to hospital patients

Volunteers come with four legs as well as two as Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

They are all members of Pets As Therapy (PAT), a national charity that supports owners who want to share their pets with hospital patients and staff as well as schools, care homes and prisons.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals has eight pet regulars including Frankie, a 12-year-old Pomeranian Bichon. Her owner Margaret Ford has been visiting with Frankie for nearly six years and also volunteers with the Trust chaplaincy team.

This week Frankie and Margaret were joined on their travels around Blackpool Victoria Hospital by Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child to mark Volunteers' Week.

Volunteer Manager Catherine Henshaw said: "The dogs are like celebrities when they come visiting! Everyone is cheered up by them especially patients who may be missing their pets while in hospital."

[Research has shown dogs like Frankie can also reduce stress levels and support wellbeing.](#)

Both patients and staff can request a visit from the PAT dogs. Email Catherine at bfwh.volunteers@nhs.net.

Dogs needs to be assessed and registered with [Pets As Therapy](#) for them and their owners to become a volunteer.

... we have lots of other volunteer roles too!

Volunteers are part of hospital life at Blackpool, giving their time to help and support patients, visitors and staff in many ways.

The Trust has more than 450 active volunteers at Blackpool Victoria and Clifton hospitals, each giving at least three hours of their time a week.

[Speak to our volunteer manager Catherine Henshaw to find out more.](#)

[These are our current vacancies.](#)



Trust CEO Trish Armstrong-Child with volunteers Margaret Ford and Frankie

45. NHS75 children's art competition winners revealed



Harry Bond, aged 12

We asked children to tell us in pictures what they love about the NHS to mark the service's 75th birthday on 5 July.

George Henry Haddow, aged 7, was the winner of the category for under eights.

Clare Stafford, ward manager on the children's ward at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, was one of the judges and was particularly impressed with the thought that went into George Henry's drawing. His mum echoed this, saying it took him all day.

Meriel Gundayao, aged 12, winner in the 8-14 years category, said

she was inspired by her mum and dad who work in Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' community services.

Her drawing, which features bunting of inspirational words particularly stood out to judge Diane Booth, Head of Children's Community Services: "Meriel's drawing reflects lots of positive words about the NHS and resonated with me personally as we strive to live by these values every day."

Meriel said she one day wants to be a doctor and follow in the footsteps of her parents by having a career that helps people.

They each received family tickets to Merlin Entertainment attractions in Blackpool.



Under 8s winner George Henry Haddow



Meriel Gundayao, winner in the 8-14 years category

Harry Bond, aged 12, couldn't believe it when he found out his drawing had been selected.

Head of Charity Kila Redfearn, who organised a special hamper of Bobby Bear goodies for Harry, added: "Harry's drawing really stood out as someone who had thought about how the NHS looked 75 years ago and how it looks today, it is very impressive."

The submitted drawing will be randomly gifted to patients on our older people's services.

46. Board members see benefits of becoming a hospital volunteer



Volunteers Caitlin and Catherine with Esther Steel and Non-Executive Director Adrian Carradice-Davids

Board members at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals spent time over Volunteers Week 2023 seeing and experiencing the work of some of our 265 active volunteers.

Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child, who went for a walk with Frankie, one of our Pets As Therapy dogs, said: "During my 30-year career in the NHS, there has not been a role I have worked in that wasn't supported and touched by volunteers."

Among those donning an orange tee-shirt was Esther Steel, Executive Director of Corporate Governance, and Non-Executive Director Adrian Carradice-Davids who accompanied volunteer regulars Caitlin and Catherine at Clifton Hospital.

Reflecting on the helpfulness and warm welcome that the public receive from volunteers, Adrian said: "Volunteers should be celebrated more, I hope more will be done to celebrate the huge contribution that they make in our hospitals."

At Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Deputy Chief Executive Steve Christian joined Sue Lawler on the "mobile shop" that takes confectionery, drinks and newspapers around the wards while Director of Nursing Bridget Lees went out with the volunteer listeners to hear about patients' experiences of hospital.

Volunteer manager Catherine Henshaw said: "It was great that members of the Board took time out to be with our wonderful volunteers on Volunteers' Week."

"We have roles across the organisation to fit the interests and availability of everyone."



Darrell Shuck and Effie with Executive Director of People and Culture Louise Ludgrove

"Volunteering is a great way to make friends and make a contribution to your local community whether you're starting in work and want different experiences or you're towards the end of a career or retired and want something to keep you active."

[Get in touch with Catherine and her team](#) to find out more about our volunteering opportunities. [These are our current vacancies.](#)

47. Wash and sew: life and times in the laundry



New hospital laundry 1968

Tracy Manton first applied for a role at Blackpool Victoria Hospital in 1980 after her mum, who worked as an auxiliary nurse with the gynaecology team, got her an application aged 17.

At one point both her sisters Karen and Alison worked with Tracey in the laundry before going in different directions. Karen became a staff nurse for inpatient theatres and younger sister Alison join the urology team.

At the time all the laundry was all done in-house both for the Vic and other local hospitals. as well as doing contract work which brought in extra income.

Hotels and other local businesses would take advantage of the industrial-sized machines and skilled team to wash fold and iron until the in-house service closed in 2011.

Up to 50 staff would work day and night ensuring there was sufficient linen supplies for the hospital, recalls Tracy. "I remember it as being a place that was buzzing and very busy, sewing machines and the laundry room going there was a great atmosphere."

When the laundry closed, most staff were redeployed to other areas of the Trust but eight were kept on to manage linen distribution and the sewing room for colleague uniforms.

Once there were up to a dozen women on sewing machines who would all make gowns, theatre drapes and alter uniforms.

Now the team of two focus efforts on uniform supplies, embroidery and distributing linen across the hospital.



The laundry team in the 1990s



Tracy Manton preparing to embroider names on uniforms

48. Sparkling nomination for Rising Star Maxine



Joint Executive Director of Communications Shelley Wright present Maxine Rossall with her award

A nurse who returned from maternity leave to lead a new department was named this year's Rising Star at Blackpool hospitals' annual Celebrating Success staff awards.

Nominating ward manager Maxine Rossall, colleagues described her as "an incredible nurse" who was "inspiring" as well as "encouraging, supportive and approachable". Another said "we feel blessed to have a wonderful ward manager".

The Rising Star award, which was presented by Joint Executive Director of Communications Shelley Wright, honours someone who is a leader of the future, who has adapted and excelled in their new duties or existing roles and who has shown exceptional determination.

Maxine became the manager of the Same Day Emergency Care ward at Blackpool hospital when it opened in summer 2022. It offers medical and surgical care seven days a week, avoiding the need for patients to stay in hospital overnight.

Maxine said: "I'm shocked and overwhelmed. It's an honour to manage such an amazing team and I couldn't have done it without them."

[Watch Maxine learn she has won the award.](#) The runners up were Community Staff Nurse Candice Tugwell and Bereavement Specialist Midwife Laura Walsh.

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 Blackpool hospitals annual staff awards in a year which marks the service's 75th birthday on 5 July. The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.



49. Team BTH makes a splash at Blackpool Pride



Revellers at the Pride event

Colleagues from across Blackpool Teaching Hospitals joined the pageant on the prom that was Blackpool Pride this year.

A riot of colour and sound, Team BTH wound their way down the Promenade with hundreds of other revellers on a brilliantly sunny Saturday.

Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child and Executive Director of Nursing Bridget Lees were among those who joined the parade.

"I'm absolutely delighted to be here," said Trish. "This event has been in my calendar for so long. I can't tell you how proud I am, being part of this parade today and being part of the BTH family."

Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion Susie Srivastava added: "I'm so proud to be here to celebrate our wonderful, inclusive, compassionate workforce".

Planning for next year's event by the Trust's LGBT Staff Support Network is already under way with plans to make the BTH contribution bigger and better.



The Blackpool Teaching Hospitals team at Pride 2023

50. From domestic to matron: the nurse who wanted to be a hairdresser



Michelle Knighton

Michelle Knighton is a nurse who doesn't know the meaning of "it's not my job" ... because she's done every job, rising from ward domestic to clinical matron for Orthopaedics.

That's the verdict of her proud daughter Ruth Podesta as Michelle retires after 36 years from a job she never planned to do.

All she wanted to do on leaving school was hairdressing but the mobile round she found herself meant "I was a lone worker and wanted to be part of a team".

So, in 1987, Michelle's mum encouraged her to join her as a domestic at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

Within 18 months Michelle was a healthcare assistant and spent 14 years working on female care of the elderly wards where her passion was caring for patients with dementia.

With the support of the Trust, she started her nurse training in 2002, qualifying three years later and moving to the acute medical unit where she became the sister.

Daughter Ruth recalls: "Mum was heavily respected because of her high standards for patient care. She became known for her straight talking and no mess attitude."

Michelle later became a ward manager and eventually matron for Orthopaedics in 2021. She returned to manage Ward 35 again earlier this year ahead of her retirement.

Reflecting on her nursing career, she said: "Mum used to say I was 'old school'. She was very proud of me – and I'm proud I came from being a domestic to clinical matron.

"I'll still work part-time as ward manager. They're like a family and my social network. I couldn't just leave them!"

Ruth, who is Practice Development Sister in Orthopaedics, added: "During her nursing career, mum has had such an impact on many people's lives and is a massive inspiration – not just to patients but also staff, inspiring me to follow in her footsteps and many others too."



Michelle Knighton and colleagues

51. Vic's 1975 maternity opening was bye bye baby for Glenroyd



Sister Atkinson checks on a mum-to-be

Chances are that if you're from Blackpool, Fylde or Wyre, in your late forties and born in hospital it was probably at Glenroyd on Whitegate Drive, Blackpool.

Glenroyd became a maternity hospital in 1939, receiving expectant mothers from towns more at risk of Nazi bombing.

More than 40,000 babies were born there in the 35 years before the Labour MP for Blackburn and Secretary of State for Health Barbara Castle officially opened a purpose-built maternity unit at Blackpool Victoria Hospital on 14 March 1975.

The Bay City Rollers were topping the charts and it marked the end of a long wait for a maternity hospital that had been promised ever since The Beatles began their meteoric rise in the early Sixties.

The final five-storey unit, which cost £816,000 to build and £112,000 to furnish, could accommodate 120 patients and had a special care baby unit.

Mr and Mrs Eric Dugdale were the first parents to benefit when their daughter was born there at 4.34pm on 1 October 1974, although the brochure for the official opening doesn't record her name.

Unlike today when mums usually stay with their babies, providing no special care is needed, the brochure makes a virtue of its nursery: "For the first two or three nights after delivery, babies will be tucked up on their own in the ward nursery so that mothers can get some sleep."

Forward-thinking Seventies fathers were not forgotten either: "In the waiting room, there is even a convertible couch where they can spend the night if they wish."



Getting advice on caring for baby

Midwife Eileen Shaw who still practices part-time at the Vic remembers the new unit opening.

She said: "My retired friends have just had a look at the brochure and been thinking about how things have changed, especially the number of beds. We loved the photos, especially the one of Sister Atkinson on the back page, a wonderful lady.

"Two of my friends had also worked at Glenroyd and I did some shifts there when it became a nursing home managed by the wife of one of our consultants. On my first night working there, a gentleman had a dream that he was in a room full of babies. How strange was that, it having been a maternity unit?"

52. A Blackpool embrace for Filipino nursing community



Theatre practitioner Robert Yusay who leads the Cultural Diversity Network

The NHS owes a huge debt to colleagues who left their homes thousands of miles away to join the service from overseas.

Nurses from the Caribbean were the first significant waves of recruits in the 1960s and then from the Indian sub-continent in 1960s. Nationally, they now make up a fifth of nurses and a third of doctors.

Both of these communities are represented at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals but it is colleagues whose heritage is in the Philippines who account for the biggest single group.

Robert Yusay arrived in 2021 as an adaptation nurse and is now a theatre practitioner with the cardiac theatre team. He is also lead for the Cultural Diversity Network which supports internationally recruited colleagues when they arrive at the Trust.

"I really do have a passion for what the network stands for – helping people who are coming here from different cultures and backgrounds, feeling lost and a bit lonely sometimes," he said.

"I had that feeling as well. It took a lot of adapting but the network gives you support and at the same time it builds a certain kind of trust, so you know you have someone there to go through it with together.

"The network also supports the Trust's anti-bullying and anti-racism programmes to promote equality and equal opportunities."

The network's success was reflected recently in Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS trust being awarded the NHS Pastoral Care Quality Award.

Last year, 172 international nurses and midwives were recruited at Blackpool with a target of recruiting 129 more by November.

Nurses from overseas work across the Trust.



Physiotherapist Melodie Gundayao

Melodie Gundayao trained as a physiotherapist in the Philippines before moving to Blackpool in the 2003. She was initially a care home manager before moving back into physiotherapy and joining the Trust in 2021 as a community physiotherapist with Wyre Enhanced Primary Care team.

"I love working with the NHS because I have the privilege to contribute to patients' recovery and be part of their journey of rehabilitation, seeing people in their own homes," she said. "I am always proud of NHS and the amazing people I work with."

53. Pandemic challenges help transform services for hard of hearing



Audiology team members Clerical Officer Taylor Davis and Audiologist Emma-Joy Gibbons

The Covid emergency severely disrupted healthcare – not least stopping many patients attending hospital for routine appointments during the early months of the pandemic.

As the pandemic progressed, NHS teams had to come up with new ways of giving patient care. One of them was audiology at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

“Audiology activity came to a halt at the start of the pandemic and for obvious reasons patients were staying away from their GPs,” said Audiology Manager Emma Walsh. “This meant when the world started to return to normal, waiting times went through the roof.”

Restarting routine care such as fitting hearing aids and replacing batteries needed a fresh approach, especially as Covid restrictions still had months to run.

The team began to develop new ways of working, including delivering hearing aids to patients, so they could start their rehabilitation while they were staying safe at home. Instructions were provided online through the Trust website for those who wanted to access their care this way. As GP surgeries were closed to the general public, batteries were posted rather than having to be collected.

The team historically offered a drop-in repair service for hearing aid users at various sites across the Fylde coast, which they were unable to maintain due to social distancing. This was replaced by an appointments system – “patients have told us that they much prefer it this way, as now there’s very little waiting”, said Emma.

Modern digital hearing aids also offer more changes for patients, there are plans in place to offer remote care, where hearing aid updates can be sent to a patient’s smartphone and uploaded to their device without having to visit the department.

The team is also working with B.Digital, the Trust digital transformation team, to change the vestibular service for patients with balance issues. Questionnaires are being developed for GP surgeries, as well as patients, so they are able to direct patients to the right care in the right place more quickly, and rehabilitation is able to start sooner.

“Due to these changes during the pandemic many patients have learned self-care for their hearing aid with the information and support we’re able to provide,” said Emma.

“Of course, we’re always here for those patients who can’t, for whatever reason, do it themselves but for many people this approach is much more convenient.”

The team’s success is also reflected in much shorter waits for care. In the last six months, the number of patients waiting for an appointment has been reduced by more than half.

History of treating hearing loss in the NHS

The NHS started to helping people who were hard of hearing with electronic aids soon after the service was founded in July 1948.

By October 1953, 401,524 people were using a NHS hearing aid. This was the Medresco model developed by Post Office engineers in the early 1940s, originally with the intention to help people with hearing difficulties use the phone. It consisted of a body-worn receiver connected to an earpiece.

Even though the Medresco model was a god-send to people who would never have been able to afford a hearing aid, to begin with NHS technology often lagged behind what was available commercially.

This all changed in 2000 when the Modernising Hearing Aid Services initiative, funded by Government through the charity RNID, started the introduction of modern digital hearing aids which continues to this day.

54. It's Father's Day every week at the Saturday Dads' Club



Imran with wife Amy, Marlo and Zaria

Second-time dad Imran Dickinson has been sharing his experience of fatherhood at a Saturday Dads' Club backed by Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

Imran, 32, has two children, Marlo, aged three, six-month-old Zaria who were both born at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

"We had a smooth birth with both our children. There were a few more hospital visits when my wife was pregnant with Zaria due to reduced movement but we were well looked after by the midwives," he said.

When Marlo was very young, the couple initially struggled to get a diagnosis for what they now know to be a cows' milk allergy.

"It was very emotional with it being lockdown as well. We felt very alone. It is not nice seeing your child screaming when taking milk or being in discomfort. We didn't have a great experience with our GP and decided to move to another doctor's who helped us."

"When Zaria was born, we went through it all again, being told we had to buy the milk until we saw a paediatrician. The milk is £40 for a 400ml tub.

"However, this time we had the confidence to push back and get a diagnosis from the GP and got a prescription for the appropriate milk as soon as possible. Those situations were very stressful for myself and wife."

Imran took Zaria with him to the dads' club and found it particularly useful sharing his experiences with other dads and hearing from them.

"There are loads of groups for parents and these are mostly aimed at mums. They are great and have been a good support, but it was nice to be around other dads who share my perspective and can relate more."

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals with Blackpool Better Start wants to help fathers be the best dads they possibly can.

Community Engagement Officer Anthony Barrot said: "Father's Day tomorrow also launches Father's Week and our team will be out and about running sessions and raising the awareness of dads' support.

"Blackpool Better Start supports dads like Imran on a weekly basis. Not only do we run groups aimed at bringing together like-minded dads and help give them the advice and confidence, but we also recruit dad role models who volunteer to provide one-to-one support."

Any dads who feel they have experience and would make a good mentor to another dad should get in touch with Anthony by email. You could be a grandad, dad or male role model.

55. Biomedical scientist Sarah is Learner of the Year



Sarah Dickinson receives here award

Wife and mum Sarah Dickinson who only started work three years ago as a medical laboratory assistant was named Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Learner of the Year.

She received her award in the 2023 Celebrating Success awards from Executive Director of People and Culture Louise Ludgrove.

Sarah joined in 2020 but in that time she was promoted, started an apprentice degree course and most recently appointed her team's first biomedical scientist trainee in the Anticoagulant Dosing and Advice Service which supports the warfarin clinic for people at risk of blood clots.

Presenting the award, Louise said: "I'm told her enthusiasm is 'boundless', 'a joy to work alongside' and her college mentor says she's more interactive on her studies than the full-time students."

Sarah was one of 26 colleagues who were nominated for Learner of the Year in the awards. The runners up were physiotherapy assistant Holly Andersen and staff nurse Victoria Knowles.

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 in a year which marks the service's 75th birthday on 5 July.

The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public.



56. Birthday blooms mark 75 years since founding of NHS



Data and performance manager Darren Yarnold with one of the NHS75 floral displays

The grounds maintenance team got into the spirit of the 75th birthday of the NHS with blue and white flower beds at the entrance to Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

It was one of the projects seen by North West in Bloom judges, led by chair Bernard Pendleton. Last year, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals received a Gold Certificate in the competition which is run by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Grounds Maintenance Manager Ben Simpson from our estates and facilities partners Atlas told the judges about the latest plans and projects to make the hospital grounds greener and more sustainable.

Some areas underwent "no mow May" and that period has been extended while others are designated a "no-spray" where alternatives to chemicals, such as using peppermint and vinegar, are explored.

Ben said: "No mow areas help insects and pollinators thrive and are nicer than just grass. You can see one such area in front of the Outpatients department. There are also some wildflowers in bloom."

He has also created a bug hotel and an old BT phone kiosk has been repurposed as a butterfly house.

More than 100 whip trees given by the Woodland Trust are being grown on before planting and the hospital's trees receive an annual inspection. Using recycled wood, 15 bird boxes and 15 bat boxes are now providing much needed refuge for nature around the grounds.

The Stroke unit has a refurbished garden, funded by Blue Skies Hospital Fund, featuring raised flowerbeds and new paving. There are plans for a pergola and new fencing.

New wooden planters are in bloom near entrances to the Pathology, Outpatients and Cardiac departments, with nearby benches allowing patients and visitors to take a break outdoors in a "greener" area of the site.

There are plans for a nature trail at the rear of the social club as well as space for raised beds to grow our own plants.

And as ever the chaplaincy gardens is a tranquil central place for anyone needing reflection time.



Nature calls: old phone box is now butterfly house

57. Darren finds recipe for success in hospital kitchen



Kitchen manager Darren Cadwell

When Darren Cadwell started work as a trainee in the kitchen at Blackpool Victoria Hospital's, he couldn't even peel an onion

"I really couldn't, I had to be shown!" he says – but it didn't stop him rising through the ranks.

"I did so well in the kitchen that I came off the training scheme after six months and was made a salad maker."

His pay also more than doubled overnight – from £25 a week to a dizzying £54. Darren's potential had been spotted.

He was sent to college to get his chef's qualification, later became a supervisor and has now been kitchen manager for 15 years.

Tomorrow (21 Jun) is National Healthcare Estates and Facilities Day and Darren is one of 251,000 such colleagues across the UK. As well chefs and cooks, these roles include housekeeping, buildings management, gardening, cleaning and portering to name just a few.

Kitchen work has changed hugely in Darren's 41 years. For a start, the kitchen is no bigger but the number of patients has doubled from 550 to 1,000.

Darren's team serves them three meals a day each on top of 1,500 staff restaurant meals.

His chefs' menus aim to keep up to date with changing tastes and dietary needs. There are more vegetarian meals and a halal dish most days.

No one makes salads any more like Darren did. Vegetables and salads mostly come in ready prepared to save on labour in the kitchens.

"We still cook everything from scratch but the recipes are more standardised these days so people know exactly what's in them," he said.

58. Windrush migrant who was hospital's first black nurse



Alison Bennison in her nursing days

Blackpool's first known black nurse Alison Bennison was one of tens of thousands of people from the Caribbean islands who became known as "the Windrush generation".

The SS Ormonde had docked in Liverpool in 1947 with 108 Jamaican islanders but it was the arrival of HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury docks in Essex that became emblematic of the first migrants' arrival thanks to this Pathe newsreel (45 secs). That day, 22 June 1948, is now known as Windrush Day.

Aged 19, Alison travelled from Barbados in 1960 to work like many migrants did in the NHS. She arrived in London and after stints nursing in Bristol and Wales, settled in Blackpool.

Alison first worked at Blackpool Victoria Hospital where she met her first husband Morton Sidebottom who had been a nurse in the RAF. She lived in Cleveleys and later Bristol Avenue, Fleetwood.

Speaking in 2021, granddaughter Lindsey Atkinson, said: "Being by herself and having very little, my grandma had to work extremely hard in environments where she was the only black person. But she says she has always had very positive experiences. She was a very popular person with a bubbly personality."

Alison's story was captured in a BBC Teach film made shortly before she died in March 2022, aged 80. The story is told by Lindsey and nine-year-old Blackpool schoolboy Dontay Searle. In the film, Lindsey shows him family photographs which are stored in the same suitcase Alison travelled with from Barbados.

Reflecting on her late grandma's life today, Lindsey said: "Grandma was incredibly proud of being a nurse. Apart from raising her children, she gave her life to it."



Alison Bennison in her later years

59. When love blossomed over the catering trolley on Ward 11



Louise Prew, right, and colleagues on a hot lock trolley

She was a trainee nurse. He was an apprentice chef. They'd been childhood sweethearts but drifted apart until one day their eyes met ... over a hot lock on Ward 11.

A heated kitchen trolley steaming with suet puddings might not be the most romantic of locations but, for Rachel Burr, her parents' courtship and family life together is forever a story of Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

"It's like a second home and a lot of my life and connections have been at this hospital," said Rachel, who is a cardiac specialist nurse in Cardiac Rehabilitation.

Mum Louise Prew and dad John Eadon had met as teenagers at the youth club in Kirkham.

She went on to train as a nurse at the Vic in the Sixties while he became the hospital's first apprentice chef.

"They bumped into each other on Ward 11 over the hot lock and started dating," said Rachel. But Louise was no easy catch and "he chased mum for a bit". They finally married in 1974 and moved to St Annes. Daughter Helen, a senior lecturer at the University of Chester, was born in 1977 and Rachel in 1980 – both at the Vic.

Rachel said her mum recalled nurse training as a very different experience from today.



John and Louise on their wedding day



Daughter Rachel Burr

"You lived in fear of matron and they lodged at the nurses' home where it was lights out at nine or 10 o'clock."

But this didn't stop Louise and her friend sneaking out to town where for fun they'd swap outfits in the ladies' toilets – "to confuse the boys". She never did get caught coming home.

Louise left nursing to work in occupational health at National Savings but returned to the NHS in 1988 for the opening of Clifton Hospital at St Annes. When she retired, she was a nurse on the Windsor unit, rehabilitating young people with disabilities.

John left the kitchen and in a varied career moved into social work from where he retired.

Rachel qualified as a nurse in 2007. Her first work placement from university at Blackpool was, of course, Ward 11, the cardiology ward where her dad would be a patient. He died in 2012, aged 68, and Louise seven years later aged 73, both at Blackpool Vic.

60. Team of the Year Award for Cancer Services



Sam Liptrot, Assistant Service Manager with Cancer Services, and Cancer Services Officer Tracy Cairns with Natalie Hudson

A team whose planning of care for patients can be a matter of life and death took the Non-Clinical Team of the Year honour at this year's Blackpool Hospitals annual staff awards.

Appointments and preventative care for cancer patients were massively disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic but the work of the Corporate Cancer Services Team helped get care back on track.

Presenting the award, our then Chief Operating Officer Natalie Hudson said: "This team is central to the care of cancer patients. They made huge strides cutting waiting lists for care and put in place improvements to enable faster diagnosis."

Team member Jessica Jones said: "It's been such a difficult time for the team but they've all worked so hard to make sure that our patients get treated as quickly as possible. I'm so proud of everyone."

More than 400 nominations were received for the Celebrating Success 2023 Blackpool hospitals annual staff awards in a year which marks the service's 75th birthday on 5 July. The ceremony was watched online by thousands of colleagues, family and members of the public. [Watch when the team found out they had won the award.](#)

The runners up were on the Community Education Sexual Health Team and the Discharge Facilitators in the Transfer of Care Hub.



61. Stained glass windows join chapel on move to new home



The Chapel's rainbow window

The Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care department was originally founded by hospital staff and volunteers and relied on the goodwill of local church leaders to provide religious cover. It was first based in an old annex off ward 15.

When the first full-time chaplain, the Rev Jessica Turner was appointed in 2002, she helped design and develop the current chapel which is now led by Rev Ian Baxter (Baptist).

Since then two prayer rooms have also opened, these are largely used by the Muslim staff, patients and visitors, who make up the hospital community.

In the year that marks the 75th anniversary of the NHS, the team is looking forward to moving to a new home.

Ian said: "We will be opening a new Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Centre just off the hospital main corridor. This is an exciting opportunity to improve the facilities for all who visit, and the addition of a quiet room and ablution facilities is very welcome."

Not everything will be new. Moving too are the chapel's stained-glass windows. A double rainbow window was donated in memory of nurse John Shaw by St Annes Christian Council and Arnold Junior School.

A second window, which is illuminated using a light box, was created in memory of the hospital's first matron, Miss Elsie H. Maclean. Remembered as forward-thinking and awarded a Coronation medal by the Queen in 1953, her window was given to the chapel by the Blackpool and District League of Nurses.

"The chapel and our additional spiritual rooms act as a safe space where anyone can seek support, should that be through spiritual guidance, bereavement or even laughter and joy as seen recently with some emergency weddings," added Ian.

He is supported by the Rev Clive Lord, the Rev Helen Houston and the Rev Paul Berry (Church of England); Father Andrew Dawson and Patrick Hynes (Roman Catholic); Imam Ashfaq Rafiq Patel (Muslim); and Rev Jim Williams (United Reformed Church).



Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Team

In addition to a regular schedule of worships, the team is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Most recently, Ian attended the Emergency Department early one Saturday to give help to a bereaved family. The team support all colleagues providing support for families in crisis, for example their work with the SWAN end of life and bereavement team and training of staff.

62. Surgery eases knee pain after donor's gift

Everyone has heard of kidney donors – but what about a knee donor? Or a meniscal transplant to be more precise.

Thanks to the NHS Amanda Fryer is now in much less pain after successfully undergoing an operation for the knee procedure in 2021.

"I now have a much better quality of life," said Amanda, who is ward clerk at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

The meniscus is a C-shaped cartilage in the knee that helps the joint bear weight, glide and turn.

Surgery can repair a damaged or torn meniscus but sometimes they have to be removed and the joint can become very painful with swelling and arthritis.

Amanda had suffered with her right knee since an accident aged 14. Years of treatment followed until the meniscus became too damaged to repair after her knee was caught in the door of a motorhome.

She was operated on under general anaesthetic at Wrightington Hospital, near Wigan, which has a proud tradition of orthopaedic surgery. It was there in 1962 that Sir John Charnley performed the world's first total hip replacement surgery.

Amanda's donor meniscus came from the United States but "the operation had to be postponed because I'd been sent a left knee meniscus rather than a right".

The meniscus has no blood supply of its own which means there is no risk of rejection by the body. That meant Amanda was able to move straightaway to a programme of rehabilitation.

"I want to say a special thank you to Stephen Jackson, my physiotherapist at Blackpool, who has been very supportive," said Amanda, who will qualify as bereavement and grief counsellor later this summer.



Amanda Fryer

63. Pharmacy robot helps keep medicines flowing



Senior Pharmacy Technician Martin Anderton checks out the robot in its stockroom

One of the latest recruits to the Pharmacy department at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals has two arms and not much else.

But what it lacks in body, the £400,000 robot more than makes up for in speed and accuracy.

"Our old robot served us faithfully for 14 years but it had come to the end of its working life," said Director of Pharmacy Rebecca Bond. "The new one can process at least 120 requests an hour as well as being able to dispense medicines for secure collection when the department is closed overnight."

Once pharmacy staff process a request for a medicine, the robot selects the box from the shelves, scans it to ensure it is the right medication and transports it upstairs to the Pharmacy Dispensary for further checking and dispensing.

The robot operates from a self-contained stockroom beneath the Pharmacy department. It can also restock itself overnight.

NHS hospitals spend £8 billion a year on patient medicines and it's the job of inpatient pharmacy departments to dispense them.

Rebecca leads a team of 148 people serving Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Clifton Hospital and community services as well as a contracted out-of-hours on-call service.

Each year the team dispenses 276,000 packs of medicines. Most of these supplies go to inpatients with the aim of turning each request around in less than 90 minutes.

"It's our job to make sure patients get their medicines on time and that they're safe to use," said Rebecca. "This includes providing advice on the safe use of medicines to patients and colleagues with the added support of our Medicines Information Helpline on 01253 953791 for more complex queries."

Rebecca's colleague, Angela Nelson, retired this month as Assistant Director of Pharmacy after 37 years with NHS, 26 of them at Blackpool.

"People see clinical work as being out on the wards but there's so much more to pharmacy," said Angela.

Covid "was an opportunity to show more of our skills" such as leading and managing the urgent roll out of vaccines no one had ever used or handled before.



Retiring ... Angela Nelson

64. From 940 gram baby to student vet with world at her feet

Life-saving NHS care started early for veterinary student Ella-Mae Storm-Eckersley when she was born at just 26 weeks.

"She weighed 940 grams (33 ounces) and we thought we were going to lose our little girl", said dad Andrew, from Poulton.

But thanks to huge advances over the years in neonatal medicine and the dedicated professionals in the special care baby unit at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Andrew and wife Sarah were soon taking baby Ella-Mae home to join their three other children.

Fast-forward 19 years and Ella-Mae was a patient again – but this time in Critical Care with complications from a serious infection following a kidney stone removal in Nottingham.

"It's been a worrying time for us all but thanks to all the staff here at Blackpool I hope to be back at university by the end of July," she said.

The student vet and former Rossall School student has been drawn to animals for as long as she can remember, making medicines for her teddies when she was small.

And work experience at a vets' practice, on a beef cattle farm and at Blackpool Zoo all convinced her to become a vet.

Together with two years' volunteering at an animal rescue centre in Shanghai where Andrew was working, it all helped her win a place on a five-year course in veterinary medicine at Nottingham University which she started in April 2022.

Whereas doctors develop a diagnosis from what they see and what their patients tell them, Ella-Mae said being a vet had an added difficulty.



Ella-Mae with mum Sarah and dad Andrew

"First, there has to be clear communication with the owner as the animals can't tell you anything. Then, we can piece together this information together to provide the best possible care for the patient."

Speaking from Ward 15A and looking forward to being discharged, she added: "I've got no firm plans for when I qualify but I'd like to develop my surgical skills, work abroad and with exotic species as well as doing charity work."

65. Blackpool babes born to our colleagues at the Vic

Two hundred babies are born on a typical month at Blackpool Victoria Hospital – and our colleagues and their families are often among people celebrating a birth.

We asked them to share their beautiful babies with us and these are just some of the pictures we received to mark the 75th birthday of the NHS.



65. Blackpool babes born to our colleagues at the Vic (continued)

Among the contributors is Medical Examiners' Officer Paula Dimery who had both her babies at the Vic. Son Jordan was born in January 1996 and her second daughter Abigail in September 2023.

She said: "My stay in hospital the second time inspired me to want to work in the NHS and the following year I began work as a healthcare assistant on Ward B obstetrics and gynaecology. Abigail is now 19 and a healthcare assistant working on Ward C."

Training Coordinator Andrea Hammond's son, Harry, was born on New Year's Eve 2017. "Jade a newly qualified midwife made sure I had the best and most comfortable experience possible," she said.

"After 15 years of fertility treatment, I then caught naturally. I can never thank Blackpool maternity for all the support and safely delivering our son."



66. Fleetwood brother and sister were first NHS twins



Rita and Ronnie in their pram

With the NHS less than an hour old, a brother and sister believed to be the new health service's first twins were born at Blackpool maternity hospital on 5 July 1948.

The Evans twins were two of six babies born in the town that day. Ronnie was first at 12.45am followed by Rita at 1.20am.

"My mum was six months' pregnant before realising she was having twins because in those days there was no such thing as scans," said Reet, as she prefers to be known. "So, there was then

a run around getting another one of everything and people knitting like mad.

"Ronnie was born first and they said 'you've got a lovely little boy' and mum went 'oh, my husband will be disappointed, he wanted a girl'. Ronnie was a scrawny thing and then out comes Rita, and they went 'no wonder he's scrawny, look at this size of this one!' So, dad got his girl."

But Ronald Evans was a Fleetwood fishing boat skipper and was on a three-week sailing to Iceland.

Ronnie and Rita's story came to light after an appeal to find the six babies born in hospital in Blackpool on 5 July 1948.

The twins were born at the old Glenroyd maternity hospital in Whitegate Drive instead of Fleetwood's smaller Milton Lodge hospital. Such a birth pre-NHS would cost have many times Ronald's wage for three weeks' fishing. So, unsurprisingly, lots of people had babies at home.

The NHS helped Ronnie and Reet and their families in many ways over the years. As children they drank a bottle of stove cleaner – "we were rushed to the doctor's but he said not worry, we'd just poo black for a few days", laughs Reet.

But the family was urgently in need of the very best healthcare when Ronnie was 18 months-old and contracted polio. He was left partially paralysed and experienced years of physiotherapy to return his limbs to working order. One exercise involved practising with an improvised blow football game.

"I was in hospital once and someone in the next cubicle said 'what's up with him' and they said 'he's had polio'. And I'm blowing this thing and this man came in and it was Stanley Matthews."

The legendary England and Blackpool FC footballer then sent out and got the young Ronnie a proper blow football to play with.

The twins still live in Fleetwood a few hundred yards from each other. Their older brother, Keith, died in 2017.

Ronnie worked first in the building trade, including on every bridge on the M65, and then as a haulage driver. Reet worked in the Fleetwood shoe trade and later at the old Smiths crisp factory.

Reflecting on their lives lived in parallel with the NHS, she said: "The only thing that I can say is that I'm so grateful we were born when we were. Our parents could have never afforded the treatment that we both had. And I'll support the NHS fully till the day I die."



Rita and Ronnie in 2023

67. The way we were for NHS25: hospital news from 1973

Today's Blackpool Teaching Hospitals own bulletin goes out to colleagues twice weekly by email and is also available online.

The Chief Executive and her team also hold a weekly video briefing that all colleagues are welcome to watch and join in.

Fifty years ago, other than word of mouth, it was newsletters and print that were the main way of communicating news. The library at Blackpool Victoria Hospital has unearthed two examples of these, printed on A4 paper by stencil duplicator, from May/June and July 1973.

Published by Blackpool and Fylde Hospital Management Committee, they include current and historical stories about the then more numerous but smaller local NHS hospitals, a personal column of births, marriage and deaths, news of appointments and awards, as well as staff social and sports news.

There is also information about preparations for the 1974 reorganisation of the NHS which ushered in regional and district health authorities, now long gone.

[The May/June edition](#) includes a story about nurse Maureen Kennedy, from Blackpool, who moved to work in Iceland – but was finding the cost of living very high. Developing a roll of camera film cost an eye-watering £6, she wrote.

There's also report from the latest session of the "Shrinkers" keep fit class at Devonshire Road hospital social club: "Mrs Barbara Walker who lost over three stone won a prize of £8.50 towards a new outfit. The prize money was collected by 5p weekly subscriptions from members."

[July's edition](#) records the retirement of Miss K. Hayes as matron at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. She had trained in York and London, moving to Blackpool from Cornwall as matron in 1965. Among her many retirement gifts were three chandelier lamp shades, a [Hoover Dustette](#) and one set of nylon bed linen.

At the now demolished Wesham Park hospital, a continental food week was held in the restaurant where "as well as the traditional food there were one or two foreign main courses served for lunch each day".

It was clearly popular with a 20 per cent uptick in customers with "quite a few staff from Victoria Hospital" making the trip to sample the dishes.



Caption text

68. When NHS heroes really did wear capes



Nurse Gill Hodgkinson shows off the historic cape with one of our NHS75 banners

“Not all heroes wear capes” was a popular saying online during the Covid pandemic about NHS staff ... but at one time they really did.

Anyone familiar with TV’s Call The Midwife will know that the cape was once a key part of a nurse or midwife’s uniform.

One such example can be seen in the mezzanine seating area above the main entrance at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals which has been decorated to mark the 75th birthday of the NHS on Wednesday.

The heavy wool cape is navy blue with a scarlet lining and trim. Inside the collar, the cape is embroidered “638 Str J. Johnson”.

Assembled by Data and Performance Manager Darren Yarnold, the cape is part of a collection of memorabilia which includes scrapbooks, photographs and what is believed to be a nurse’s scarf. There is also the casualty register featured earlier in our NHS75 blog.



The NHS75 display on the mezzanine at Blackpool Victoria Hospital

69. Trust raises flag to 75 years of service

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals kicked off its celebrations of the 75th birthday of the NHS by raising a flag at Victoria Hospital.

The Trust marked 75 years of the NHS with a host of events taking place over the week commencing 3 July to encourage colleagues, patients and people across the area to get involved.

The NHS was founded on 5 July 1948 as the world's first universal, free at the point of use health system. Today, it treats 1.3 million people a day in England.

In the build-up to the birthday, colleagues and patients have been sharing memories and stories of what the NHS means to them over the past 75 days.

Then among its fundraising activity, hospital charity Blue Skies is holding a 7.5mile 'Walk for Wards' from Clifton Hospital to Blackpool Victoria Hospital on the night of the birthday itself.

The main entrance at Blackpool Victoria Hospital was lit up blue for the evening, and among the themed decorations in the main entrance were a special exhibit of items from over the years.

There was plenty for people to get involved with elsewhere too, from joining a local Parkrun or taking part in a NHS Big Tea event.

Trish Armstrong-Child, Chief Executive at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, said: "I couldn't be more proud or privileged to be celebrating this incredible milestone with our colleagues, patients and their families.

"I've enjoyed so much sharing our stories about the way the Trust has changed as the NHS itself has changed, but also looking ahead to new ways of working and supporting our community.

"I want to thank everyone at the Trust in all our services and settings for their tireless hard work and dedication, but also our community, patients and partners for getting involved in the activity we have planned. It means so much to us to see the support."



Trust CEO Trish Armstrong-Child and Dawn Mitchell, Portering Supervisor

70. Restoring Blackpool's 'other' Tower

On the week of the NHS' 75th birthday, Blackpool had two towers lit up in blue to mark the special day.

Whilst Blackpool Tower shines out across the town, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals is also celebrating as the renovated clock tower near the A&E at Blackpool Victoria Hospital is unveiled.

The clock tower's reveal will show off new features including exterior lighting. And in a nod to its slightly more famous counterpart down the road, the Clock Tower was lit in blue to see in the special birthday.

The clock tower now been re-painted, has a repaired roof and had its mouldings repaired and conserved. There'll also be a new clock mechanism and weather vane installed when all of the renovations are complete – due to be later in July.

The historic clock tower moved to its current site after being removed from the original main hospital building which was built in the 1930s.

The restoration project has been led by the team at Atlas, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals estates partner.

Estates Supervisor John Paterson said: "Our team have really enjoyed working on the clock tower project. Restoring it has proved challenging at times but we have got there in the end and it will be totally restored with the new clock being fitted at the end of July, all other works are now complete."



The historic clock tower in its previous location



The clock tower now

71. Blue Skies' NHS75 walk raises thousands

It was a case of 'Blue Skies all the way' on the sunny evening of 5 July as 75 walkers (coincidentally) donned their trainers and boots to raise funds for the Blackpool Teaching Hospital's charity to mark NHS75.

Blue Skies Hospital Fund organised the walk of 7.5 miles along the coast from Clifton Hospital in St Annes to Blackpool Victoria Hospital as part of its fundraising activities to mark the 75th birthday of the NHS.

The group was accompanied by four dogs and the procession of blue t-shirts was greeted with support and waves from passing motorists. The walk followed a route along the Promenade and included well-deserved refreshment stops at Hampton by Hilton and the Waterloo Pub, where walkers were greeted with water and snacks as they headed to the finish line.

At the end of the walk everyone received a certificate and photos were taken before people headed home to put their feet - and paws - up.

Kila Redfearn, Head of Charity said "I can't believe how many people turned up to support this very special milestone event. We have raised almost £3k so far with possibly more to come. Should you wish to donate to the 75th Anniversary Appeal please visit our [JustGiving page](#)."

[Click here to see the charity's JustGiving page.](#)



Walks on route down the Fylde coastline



The walkers line up to start the walk at Clifton Hospital

72. Photo archive reveals celebrity visits to the Trust



TV host Roy Walker

The 75th birthday of the NHS has encouraged many people to dig through their archives and photo albums and share some wonderful photos of the Trust in years gone by.

Now the pages of a recently-unearthed photo album, found by colleagues in the Trust's IT team, have shone a spotlight on a number of visits by well-known figures and celebrities



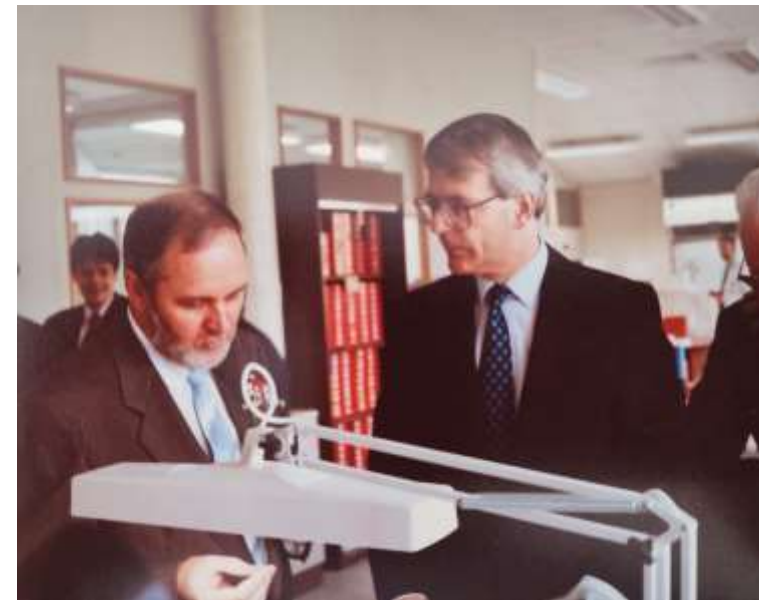
Fitness expert and host Diana Moran

Among these is a visit by former Prime Minister John Major. Mr Major was in the area attending the official opening of the National Artificial Eye Service in April 1993.

Fans of the 1980s TV show *Breakfast Time* will recognise Diana Moran, a fitness expert who became known as the Green Goddess thanks to her trademark green leotard.

Diana has since become an advocate for the Breast Cancer Campaign. She was visiting to open the Osteoporosis Screening service at the former South Shore Hospital, in July 1994.

Irish TV host Roy Walker is also featured in the album, when he took part in an event to officially launch the Community Health



Former PM John Major

Services NHS Trust, a forerunner to the current NHS organisations in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre.

Roy is best known by many as the host of *Catchphrase* between 1986 and 1999.

73. Trust team attends special NHS75 Westminster Abbey service

A group of four colleagues from Blackpool Teaching Hospital's maternity services attended a special service at Westminster Abbey to mark the 75th birthday of the NHS.

On Wednesday, 5 July across the country organisations, charities, and communities joined forces to celebrate the big day. While Blackpool Teaching Hospitals hosted a series of events and initiatives close to home for colleagues and patients, four outstanding colleagues were nominated to attend a special service in London.

NHS England along with special guests held a multi-faith service for NHS staff, volunteers and partners at Westminster Abbey. From Blackpool Teaching hospitals four colleagues from the Trust's maternity services were nominated to attend to represent the organisation.

Two of those attending, Laura Walsh, Swan Bereavement Midwife and Eileen Shaw, long-serving Midwife of 50 years, earlier this year were winners in the Trust's staff awards as they were recognised for their services to the NHS.

Eileen, who received the Trust's Lifetime Achievement award invited her colleague Julia Thompson, a Sister Midwife.

Laura, who received the Compassion in Action award was accompanied by Lucy Brockill, Swan Bereavement Support Worker.

The service was conducted by The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle MBE, Dean of Westminster and saw a series of speakers throughout the event which was also attended by Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who also gave a presentation.

Laura Walsh said: "I feel very honoured to have been chosen to represent the Trust at the NHS 75th anniversary service. The day was wonderful and emotional for us all.

"We stood proud in our uniforms, sharing stories of the wonderful work we witness everyday at Blackpool, the inspirational colleagues we are lucky to work alongside and the patients and families we are blessed to meet.

"It was clear the NHS means so much to everyone and there seemed to be a rekindled realisation that it must be protected and prioritised."

Lucy and Julia echoed these comments adding how proud they were and what an amazing experience it was. Lucy, who has worked for the Trust for 16 years, added that this has been one of the highlights of her career so far.

The service, which lasted an hour-and-a-half, brought together hundreds of NHS workers and volunteers from across the country.

Eileen, who has seen the development of the NHS first-hand over her career, spoke with pride about Blackpool and used the service as an opportunity to reflect: "The day was perfect in every way, we met so many interesting people and spoke with our colleagues from across the country who share our passion.

"The service was beautiful, the music and choir brought tears to my eyes. Listening to each person's testimony made me feel privileged to have worked in a small way for the NHS. I am truly grateful for this day."



Laura, Eileen, Julia and Lucy attend the service at Westminster

74. Colleagues across the Trust celebrate the big day

Colleagues across Blackpool Teaching Hospitals marked the 75th birthday of the NHS in style.

During the week a total of 1,500 cupcakes were delivered to hospital and community-based teams to help them get in the celebratory spirit.

Meanwhile, there were ticket giveaways, a special menu for colleagues, a garden party at Clifton Hospital and much more.

On the mezzanine at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, executive colleagues supplied 'bottomless brews' to colleagues, patients and visitors. You can see some of the photos here.



Esther Steel and Louise Ludgrove prepare brews on the BVH mezzanine



Colleagues across the Trust celebrate with their NHS75 cupcakes

75. Three 'national babies' meet for first time in 75 years



(l-r) Rita Doran, Bridget Lees, Ronnie Evans, Trish Armstrong-Child and Marcia Roper meet to mark NHS75.

Three babies born in Blackpool the day the NHS was founded in 1948 met for the first time in nearly 75 years.

Twins Ronnie Evans and Rita Doran, from Fleetwood, and Marcia Roper, from Poulton, celebrated theirs and the NHS's 75th birthday with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Chief Executive Trish Armstrong-Child and Director of Nursing Bridget Lees.

The "national babies, as the Blackpool Evening Gazette described them at the time, were tracked down after an appeal to find six babies delivered at the former Glenroyd maternity hospital on 5 July 1948.

Trish said: "It was lovely afternoon and a wonderful moment to bring together three people who have a lifelong connection but never met other than as day old babies in a hospital cot.

"Their stories reminds what an important role the NHS and all the colleagues that make it possible play in our lives. Happy birthday to you all."

Ronnie and Rita are believed to be the new health service's first twins, Ronnie having been born at 12.45am followed by Rita 35 minutes later.

Rita said: "It was very emotional for me. We had a hug and bit of a cry."

Marcia arrived at 3.30am. "It would have cost £9 to have a baby in hospital. I can't remember if mum said I was early or late but the midwife would tell her to hang on for the NHS!" she said.

The three other babies born at Glenroyd that day were reported as David Tomlinson, Allen Ward and Patricia Clayton.



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