

Dear Editor,

Working for DHL Global Mail in Kent, I am involved in the distribution of *Infant* magazine and recently noticed the cover headline of the November 2008 issue 'Focus on Greys Hospital Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa'.

This caught my attention as the hospital played a significant role in my life. On reading the article, it brought home to me the vast changes that have taken place in the last fifty years and I thought it might interest your readers to hear a little about the hospital in days gone by.

The city of Pietermaritzburg, named after the Afrikaans Trekker leaders, Piet Retief and Gert Maritz who founded the town in 1848, is situated in an area previously known to the indigenous Zulu population as Umgungunhlovu, the 'Place of the Elephant'. This was a reference to the seat of power of Zulu king Dingaan and the Colonial Governor. Today, after colonial rule under the British has also come and gone, and black government taken over from the white Nationalist party in 1994, it has again been adopted as an official name of the city and area.

Greys hospital, having been built in 1856, was ready in plenty of time to receive me in the children's ward several times during the 1950s to repair the results of a variety of boyish accidents. At 10 years old I recall my older sister coming to visit me

at Greys on the day of her wedding, resplendent in her wedding dress. She was not allowed into the ward as children were quarantined from all but their parents. I watched with pride as she stood on the grass and I peered through the wire mesh gate.

Fast-forwarding the years, I found myself watching my son being born in Greys' spotless maternity ward in 1973, delivered by the family doctor, as were most white children at that time, in what is now considered the bizarre atmosphere of a whites-only hospital.

There were two other main hospitals, but separated in townships at either extreme of the city, Edendale hospital for black people only and Northdale for Indian and 'coloured' (mixed race) people only. My father was, at the time, the chief catering inspector for the Natal hospitals and had fascinating tales to tell of these institutions that were beyond the experience of most white people.

I also witnessed my daughter being delivered by the same family doctor again in all-white Greys in 1980, when there was still no sign of integration of the races.

At this time, we were not yet fully conscious of AIDS, so to read only two decades later of what a huge factor it has become in the management of the maternity wards of Greys hospital, and neonatal care, is startling and very sad.

Before my family left South Africa, to

take up their inheritance of citizenship rights from my British-born father (who died in Greys) and relocate to the UK, my son was a volunteer in the Natal provincial ambulance service and helped deliver many babies in an ambulance, while being shot at by black township gangs. They rushed to get mother and baby to Edendale Hospital as they could not be taken to Greys.

Now, living in a different world from those times, happy yet disturbing memories surfaced on reading the article. The bond that I have with this hospital filled me with emotion on reading of the challenges and struggles the present generation now face within the same 150-year-old walls of Greys hospital.

Brian Montgomery

Re: Reducing stress through swaddle bathing, written by Kerry Hall

Inga Warren would like to point out that although she is a member of the *Infant* editorial board she did not review the above article, published in the November 2008 issue of *Infant* and has not approved its contents.

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Irish Perinatal Society Annual Meeting



irish perinatal society

**Date: Friday 20th and
Saturday 21st March 2009**

**Venue: Carton House, Maynooth,
Co Kildare**

Speakers:

- Dr Martin White
- Professor Patricia Crowley
- Dr Stan Craig
- Professor Dierdre Murphy
- Ola Didrik Saugstad
- Professor Per Olofsson

***All abstracts must be received by
Wednesday 4th February 2009 at 5.00pm***

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