



### **Dr Ruby Scoular Beveridge (1896 – 1977)**

**(Author: Errol Payne for Australian Country Hospital Heritage Association Inc.)**

Ruby Scoular Beveridge was born at Wickham, now part of Newcastle, in New South Wales on 18 May 1896.<sup>1</sup> We do not know the story of her early life until we are very fortunate to find her name on the internet in the 1914 Calendar of the University of Sydney.

This amazing online collection of University of Sydney calendars begins in 1852.<sup>2</sup> They not only provide information about the University but the story of each student's progress through their studies. The calendar record shows that Ruby commenced studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1913. She completed this degree in 1915 and commenced studies in medicine at the beginning of 1916. From subsequent University of Sydney Calendars, we are able track her progress over the following years until she completed exams for Year 5 in 1920. For reasons which are unknown to us, Ruby did not complete year 6 studies at Sydney University and hence was not awarded the usual MBBS double degree.

However, from information sourced through the Ancestry.com website, it is apparent that she went to Scotland in 1922 to undertake further studies in medicine at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Ruby travelled with her mother, Mrs Emily J Beveridge, arriving in Liverpool on 26 Oct 1922. She gave her profession as "Student".<sup>3</sup>

The UK Medical Register for 1939 includes her name with information that she was registered as a doctor in the UK on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1923 with the qualifications Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh) (LRCP), Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh) (LRCS) and a Licentiate of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons (LRFPS) qualification from Glasgow.<sup>4</sup> All Licentiates were completed in 1923. It is clear that this year of study combined with her five years in the medical school at the University of Sydney met the qualification requirements to register as a medical doctor in the UK.

Ruby and her mother left London to return to Sydney on 21 June 1924.<sup>5</sup> After her return, she followed the necessary procedures to register as a medical practitioner in Australia. The outcome may be seen in the Register of Medical Practitioners for 1925 published in the Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales on Friday 6 Feb 1925.<sup>6</sup> Dr Ruby Scoular Beveridge of Roseville is listed with this set of qualifications: Lic. R Coll. Phys. Edin. 1923; Lic. R Coll. Surg. Edin. 1923; Lic. R Fac. Phys. Phys. Surg. Glasg. 1923. This is the same as the list above but in an abbreviated form. Her registration was recorded on 10 Dec 1924 and her registration number was 4669.

We have only one clear photo of Dr Beveridge which was taken in 1924. All doctors applying for registration in New South Wales were required to supply a signed and dated photograph of themselves. This set of photographs is now held in the New South Wales State Archives.<sup>7</sup>





Details of Dr Beveridge's early appointments are very sketchy. From the Sands Directories for Sydney, we know that she was a Resident Medical Officer at the Renwick Hospital for Infants, Summer Hill, Sydney in 1926.<sup>8</sup> This hospital was a lying-in hospital owned by the Benevolent Society. It also cared for children whose families could not afford normal medical care.

It is apparent that Dr Beveridge returned to England for reasons which we do not know. We have not yet found a record of her outward journey but she left London on 15 Sep 1928 on the return trip to Sydney.<sup>9</sup>

A record in the New South Wales State Archives indicates that she held a temporary appointment as Resident Medical Officer at a mental hospital as a locum for a doctor who was on leave for a month in December 1928 until 02 Jan 1929. This appointment was extended until 28 Feb 1929.<sup>10</sup>

On 16<sup>th</sup> July 1930, there was a report in the Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate that Ruby was appointed Junior Resident Medical Officer at Newcastle Hospital.<sup>11</sup> Ruby was still there in mid-1931 because she gave evidence at a coronial inquest into a woman's death under anaesthetic.<sup>12</sup> She also gave evidence at an inquest into a death by suicide<sup>13</sup> and a claim for hearing damage after a motor vehicle accident.<sup>14</sup>

Dr Beveridge first appears as a resident of Rockhampton in a Morning Bulletin story in December 1934 when she left by train to spend a short holiday in Murwillumbah.<sup>15</sup> Ruby is listed as a medical practitioner at the Rockhampton Hospital in the electoral rolls of 1934, 1936, 1937 and 1943.

The following information provides a glimpse of her role in Rockhampton over about 12 years.

Our Association is indebted to Archivist Yvonne Kelley for instigating the collection of written stories and oral histories about Rockhampton health professionals over many years. Through these, we



have found three first hand comments from trainee nurses about what it was like to work with Dr Beveridge.

In an account of her training days between 1932 and 1936, Alma Crudgington said *"One Resident Medical Officer was a lady, Dr Beveridge, and she was a real pet, very thin and lots of frizzy hair. We always loved working with her as she had a marvellous sense of humour"*.

Olga Evans (née Glazebrook) trained between 12<sup>th</sup> November 1940 and 17<sup>th</sup> January 1944. She had quite a bit to say about Dr Beveridge in her interview with Dr Tom Dewar. Talking to Tom about doctors, Olga said *"And then there was Dr Beveridge, who was a bit of a trick."* Dr Dewar asked "In what way?". Olga then elaborated.

*"Well she was a lady doctor and she was short, and she had very fuzzy, wiry hair. She had a uniform like us – a white uniform and there were buttons that you took off shanks. Well she would have safety pins in most of hers, and she had a cigarette hanging out of her mouth and was always followed up by a lovely cocker spaniel dog"*.

Apparently, she also had a habit of writing amusing comments on the patients' history sheets.

Olga continued *"She was a very good doctor but I had to report once – I had three infected hair follicles in my armpit. She went to the races on Saturday and she said to me, 'Why did you leave it to report now?'. I said 'Well, I've been working all the week'. She said 'Well, I'll have to lance them, but I can't be too long'"*.

*She gave me an injection but I don't think she waited very long because they hurt when she lanced the three of them and I had to be admitted to the ward. And there was Dr Margolese (sp?) who was a German doctor and she came (on duty), and she said 'I know that Dr Beveridge has ordered this treatment, but I would like to change it. How do you feel about that?'*

*I said, 'well, you're the doctor taking care of me for this afternoon and the rest of the weekend.'"*

Apparently, the alternative treatment was quite painful, but proved successful.

Olga continues *"Then we had Dr Alexander who was a blue-eyed, blonde young man straight from his College. He used to be so slow with his patients. I suppose he used to take really good care of them. We used to feed extra ones into Dr Beveridge and she didn't realise for a while. In the end, she got a bundle of them and said 'here – take them into bloody luvvy, the answer to a nurse's prayer'"*.

Ethel Williams was a wartime trainee between 1941 and 1945. Ethel said *"Our Medical Superintendent, Dr J. C. Ross, an orthopaedic surgeon, was much in demand, and as he had only our RMO, Dr Ruby Beveridge, they had an extremely busy and tiring schedule. The hospital was used as a stopover for the sick Australian troops flown in from Port Moresby en route to the Army Hospital in Brisbane"*.

The only readily available information about Dr Beveridge's time in Rockhampton can be found in stories published in the Morning Bulletin. However, she does appear in this 1936 Rockhampton Hospital staff photograph.





The medical and senior nursing staff in this photograph front row (L to R): (starting 6<sup>th</sup> from Left) Sr Lenora Reaney, Miss Doris Hallett (Hospital Board Administration), Sr Ivy Baker, Sr Margaret Graham, Sr Margaret Fraser, Dr Doris Una Skyring, Dr J. C. Ross (Medical Superintendent), Dr Ruby Scoular Beveridge, Matron Sarah Maud Green, Mr William Thomson (Hospital Board Secretary), Sr Alma Collins, Sr Dora Burke, Sr Josephine O'Dea, Sr Guillery.

The full list of names for this photograph is available on this website at <https://achha.org.au/detailed.php?num=423>.

It's clear from newspaper reports that Dr Beveridge was a very keen golfer. In the most extreme case, she was mentioned in 36 golf reports in the newspapers during 1936! She is also mentioned as a donor of golf trophies.

On the work front, Rockhampton Hospital had a very small medical staff, so Dr Beveridge, as Resident Medical Officer, appeared regularly in various courts to give evidence including treatment undertaken, certification of deaths and assessments of injuries. For example, in 1935, she gave evidence in a murder trial,<sup>16</sup> a bodily harm trial<sup>17</sup> and a claim for damages.<sup>18</sup>

During a visit to the Hospital in July 1936 by the Governor-General Lord Gowrie and Lady Gowrie, Ruby was a member of the official party along with the Chairman of the Hospital Committee, Mr L. G. Haigh, the Hospital Secretary, Mr W. Thomson, the Medical Superintendent, Dr J. C. Ross, Dr R. Maltby, Matrons Green and Allan, Sister Wheeler and a group of distinguished citizens. She was also in the official party when the Queensland Governor visited in 1936.

On a lighter note, we know that Dr Beveridge and Dr Doris Skyring were called on in 1936 to judge a baby competition in Yeppoon.

It's apparent that Emu Park was a favoured escape from Rockhampton with the Hotel Riviera being particularly popular. In this era, there were regular passenger trains between Rockhampton and Emu Park.

In 1937, Dr Beveridge spent several weeks at Proserpine recuperating from an illness. Dr Doris Skyring relieved for her during her absence. Doris Skyring's story is told in another document on this website.

<https://achha.org.au/Doris-Una-Skyring.php>



In 1938 there were several reports that Ruby had resigned after 4.5 years at the hospital. She left for Sydney by train in late November. The Hospital Committee accepted her resignation with regret. There were no reports about her in the 1939 newspapers. However, in the New South Wales State Archives, we found a record of Ruby working in the public health department as a medical officer in the mental hospital at Orange, commencing on 02 Feb 1939 for a little over a year.<sup>19</sup>

She must have returned to Rockhampton Hospital in 1940. The previous pattern of newspaper reports of activities in Rockhampton resumed in May with a mention that she was staying at the Criterion Hotel. Drs Beveridge and Skyring also spent at least one weekend at the Pine Beach Hotel in Emu Park in May 1940. Occasionally she travelled to Sydney for holidays. For example, in July 1941, she went to Sydney for a six-week holiday and her locum tenens was another female doctor, Dr Joan Harris.

The pattern of giving evidence in court cases resumed. In 1940, there was a coronial enquiry into a death under anaesthetic.<sup>20</sup> In 1941, she gave evidence at a claim for worker's compensation.<sup>21</sup> In 1942, she gave evidence in a murder trial.<sup>22</sup> In 1943, she gave evidence when a widow made a claim for compensation after her husband had been killed in a car accident.<sup>23</sup> In 1944, there was a very sad case of two American soldiers being on trial for unlawful killing after their truck collided with a girl on a bike on the corner of Canning and William Street killing her.<sup>24</sup> They did not stop at the scene, which made the matter worse.

There is no formal mention of Ruby's final departure from Rockhampton. However, it is likely to have been in August 1946 when she travelled to Sydney by plane.

I have been unable to trace her career after leaving Rockhampton. However, electoral rolls show that she was living in Newcastle in 1949. In each of the rolls for 1953, 1958, 1963 and 1972 her address was c/o Winn, Figtree Point, Toronto which is on Lake Macquarie south of Newcastle.

Ruby died in New South Wales on 24 January 1977 aged 80.

<sup>1</sup> [Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922 - Ancestry.com.au](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>2</sup> <https://calendararchive.usyd.edu.au>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518>

<sup>4</sup> [Ancestry.co.uk - UK Medical Registers, 1859-1959](https://www.ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>5</sup> [UK and Ireland, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 - Ancestry.com.au](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>6</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/223005776/14098278>

<sup>7</sup> [Photograph of Ruby Scoular Beveridge doctor \[date on photograph 14 October 1924 - State Records Authority of New South Wales \(nsw.gov.au\)\]](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>8</sup> [Sands Directories: Sydney and New South Wales, Australia, 1858-1933 - Ancestry.com.au](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>9</sup> [UK and Ireland, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 - Ancestry.com.au](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>10</sup> [BEVERIDGE, Ruby Scoular - State Records Authority of New South Wales \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.ancestry.com.au/discoveryui-content/view/27780411:1518)

<sup>11</sup> [16 Jul 1930 - PERSONAL - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/223005776/14098278)

<sup>12</sup> [27 Jun 1931 - WOMAN'S DEATH - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/223005776/14098278)

<sup>13</sup> 1931 'DEATH BY POISONING', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (NSW : 1876 - 1954), 25 April, p. 3. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article137694116>

<sup>14</sup> 1931 'LOST HEARING', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (NSW : 1876 - 1954), 25 April, p. 3. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article137694107>

<sup>15</sup> 1934 'PERSONAL', *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954), 22 December, p. 12. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article54782275>



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- <sup>16</sup> 1935 'MCQUADE ON TRIAL', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 16 May, p. 11. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article55552253>
- <sup>17</sup> 1935 'CHARGE REDUCED', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 7 November, p. 13. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article54801012>
- <sup>18</sup> 1935 'CLAIM FOR DAMAGES', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 4 December, p. 4. , viewed 31 Dec 2022, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article54804592>
- <sup>19</sup> [BEVERIDGE, Ruby Scoular - State Records Authority of New South Wales \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article54804592)
- <sup>20</sup> 1940 'Died Under Anaesthetic', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 10 October, p. 6. , viewed 07 Oct 2018, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article58269521>
- <sup>21</sup> 1941 'CLAIM FOR WORKER'S COMPENSATION Decision Reserved', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 5 April, p. 3. , viewed 07 Jan 2023, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56088742>
- <sup>22</sup> 1942 'Jury Inspects Police Inspector's Room', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 6 August, p. 6. , viewed 07 Jan 2023, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56125172>
- <sup>23</sup> 1943 'WIDOW'S CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 14 October, p. 6. , viewed 07 Jan 2023, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56292108>
- <sup>24</sup> 1944 'TWO MEN TO STAND TRIAL ON CHARGE OF UNLAWFUL KILLING', *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954)*, 1 April, p. 5. , viewed 10 Nov 2018, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article56304523>