

WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL RADIO

**THE OFFICIAL
HISTORY**

1969 - 2022



By Phil Hughes



1. BEGINNINGS



The hospital was opened as an infirmary in 1902 and the first and very primitive radio service had been run by the League of Friends, probably during the early 1960s, with a microphone and record player plugged directly into the amplifier in the radio room. The service was worse than rudimentary and soon collapsed.

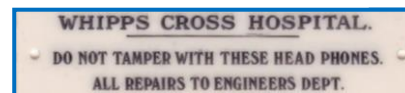
The idea for a more permanent hospital radio station came through a chance meeting between Chris Rowsell and Ivor Gilbert in 1969. Rowsell (a BBC cameraman) was helping to run a service at Chelmsford Hospital. Enquiring at a local office of Commercial Union Insurance about cover for their equipment, he met Ivor Gilbert, a committee member of the Walthamstow Lions Club.



Gilbert, intrigued by the idea of hospital radio, thought that a service at Whipps Cross Hospital might be possible. After checking that there was not one already, he approached his local Lions' President and Rowsell was invited to address a Lions' committee and to explain how hospital radio worked. The Lions agreed to support the project and an initial £200 from the Wood Street Walk event went towards it. Thus Ivor Gilbert became the co-founder (with Rowsell) and first chairman of the station. That is also the origin of the lion's head in the original station logo. Rowsell agreed to design and build the equipment and the station - housed in an 8ft x 6ft green shed within the grounds of the hospital, was constructed in three months. A shed was used as the Hospital was unable to provide accommodation and the green paint was to meet town and country planning regulations. Relationships between the new radio volunteers and the League of Friends at this time were distinctly frosty - the League refusing to help at all unless the name used was The League Of Friends Hospital Radio. That offer was not taken up.



The equipment in the hut comprised a 10-channel mono mixer, 2 turntables, 2 old tape machines, a microphone, a speaker and a clock. With the station founded in 1969 it officially went on air (using the existing 100 volt line amplifier system and ancient Bakelite ward headphones) in June 1970. It broadcast for just three hours on Sunday evenings. The presenters then included Chris Rowsell (station controller), Ivor Gilbert (chairman), Terry Martin, Tim Holland, Phil Webster and John Pinneger. The station was effectively run on behalf of, and sponsored by, the Walthamstow Lions Club and the full formal title was Walthamstow Lions Whipps Cross Hospital Radio - not exactly a snappy name for presenters.



Shortly after going on-air the hut was moved to the side of C block as it had originally been placed on the site of a proposed hospital extension.

2. EXPANSION AND THE 1970's

In late 1970 a second and larger green hut, supplied by Lion, Stan Wooten, was placed near the original hut to provide a reception and to allow interviews to be conducted from a connected studio. It would also provide room for later replacement of the original studio. The final cost was about £1000, but it was to be 1974 before the new Studio 1 in the larger hut was completed. In the summer of 1970 Paul Noble joined the station from Radio Stort (Bishop's Stortford), as the engineer. A short nightly local news programme was started to inform patients unable to get a paper and the news was provided by the local Guardian.

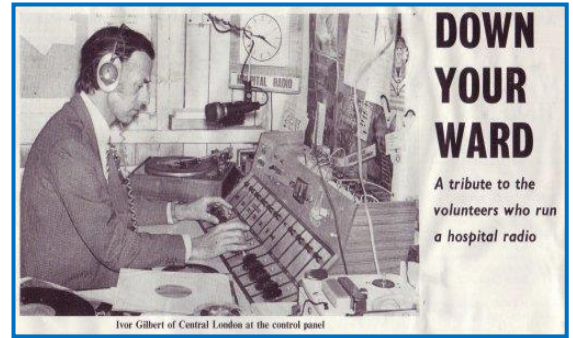


Early in 1971 broadcasting was expanded to three nights, adding Mondays and Thursdays to Sunday evenings and in June 1971 the first interview show started on Friday evenings featuring local people in the news, hosted by John James (press officer for Walthamstow Lions, later editor of the Guardian).

In August 1971 an attack on the studio caused damage to the mixer. Sabotage by a person with a grudge was suspected, though nobody was named. Also in August, a new 'Sportsline' programme began (Mondays then later Wednesdays), again with help from local paper staff including Steve Tongue. October 1971 and another evening was added -Wednesdays. The schedule began to look more comprehensive:

Sunday: 7-10pm Monday: 7-10pm Wednesday: 7-10pm
Thursday: 7-10pm Friday: 7-10pm

There was a local news bulletin at 8pm and Radio 2 was relayed when the station was off-air.



The presentation team now included: John James, Ivor Gilbert (pictured), Chris Davis, Alan Ross (later an ILR presenter), Chris Rowsell (aka Chris Nelson), Harry Harris and Steve Tongue (sports), Bob Moore, Stan Wootton, Chris Read and Brian Heard.

In November 1971 the first live 'Down Your Ward' programme went out with patients chatting to studio host Chris Nelson using a cassette recorder.

October 1972 and with the Guardian withdrawing from its provision of news to Whipps Cross, a rival local paper The Express filled the breach and supplied its own newsmen, Mike Brooke, Chris Bristow and Ralph Bernard (later Chief Executive of GWR/Classic FM/GCAP).

3. MORE NEW STAFF AND AN UPWARDS MOVE

Phil Hughes (pictured in the original studio) joined the service during 1972 bringing the total complement to around 20 people. Chris Rowsell had by now emigrated to South Africa to work for SABC. But the station was still run by Ivor Gilbert on behalf of the Lions.



Journalist Alan Thompson started a series of interview shows ('London Calling') broadcast at Whipps on a Wednesday and on Hospital Radio Stortford. These shows were then syndicated to an American station WOKW (Massachusetts) as part of the Frank Cameron Show. Two programmes were compiled in 1972 and 1973 and then lapsed for a while but were re-started in 1975. The first

programme featured hospital radio 'stars' – Ivor Gilbert, Stan Wooten, Freda Cochran, Bob Moore and Paul Noble. The 1975 edition (produced by Paul Noble) included interviews with with bigger names - Kenny Everett, Graham Dene, Adrian Love and Stephanie de Sykes. The co-operation with Capital Radio inspired Joan Shenton's 'Person to Person' show on Capital. A fourth transatlantic tape was made for station CHAM in Canada and was also broadcast on Whipps Cross Hospital Radio – guests included Andy Fairweather Low, Status Quo, Mark Bolan, Splinter and Sailor. There was also a Monday Magazine programme aimed at women with Dave Howell and Jenny Overy.

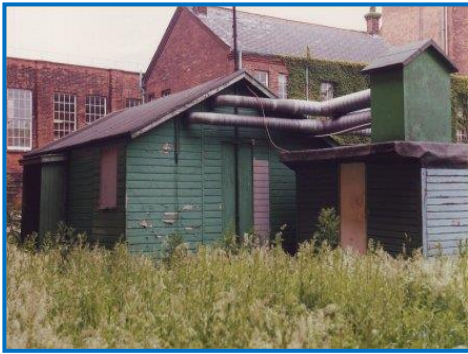


In 1973 Saturday evenings (7-11pm) were added to the schedule. A plan was made to connect programmes to King George Hospital, Newbury Park. However, that connection was never made.



March 1974 and operations were moved from the original wooden hut into the larger hut (on the left below) and a new Studio 1 with curved slider faders was brought online having been built by Paul Noble and Dave Howell. One of the few pictures of that studio shows Alan Thompson with the mayor in 1977.

The original hut was later grafted onto the larger hut which, already in place, had been used as a reception



and talks studio and would now be home for the next 18 years. Later further hut was grafted on to act as a technical workshop though exactly when is a mystery. It eventually supported the crucial 'air conditioning' system (seen right of frame).



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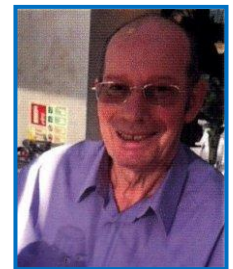
Onto June 1974 and two more professionals joined briefly, Chris Serle (then BBC Radio Producer of Late Night Extra and later That's Life!) and Kevin Ward (Capital Radio). Significantly a direct studio phone line was installed 01-556 5769 which would become ingrained on collective memories.

4. A CRISIS - 1974

Suddenly in July 1974 there was a mass walk-out by the volunteers and the newly-joined 'professionals' after Ivor Gilbert resigned as chairman and Denis Woodley was appointed by the Lions. It was caused by a dispute with the Lions over interference in the running of the service. Gilbert wanted autonomy but the



Lions insisted on a tight rein. The service partially closed. Gilbert moved to Moorfields Eye Hospital in central London to launch a new station there but curiously was still very much involved in the Lions.

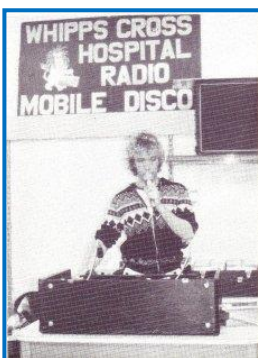


In July 1974 the new studio in the larger hut was formally opened by the local mayor and in August 1975 another new chairman, Mike Myers

(also from the Lions Club) took over from Denis Woodley after just a year. It was a popular appointment.

5. FUNDRAISING AND FURTHER EXPANSION

In January 1976 the WXHR Disco (the idea of Mike Myers who had seen one run by the Lions) was launched to raise cash. The station itself cost approximately £600 pa to run



at this time and the disco cost £500 to set up but was started on the basis that it should pay for the upkeep of the station. It soon covered its set-up costs and then generated substantial profits. Seen here is Geoff Hemming in the only existing picture of the disco. He later moved to several commercial radio stations.



Ian Betteridge, 'club DJ and advertising consultant' joined as a presenter (later chairman). A short-lived experiment was run putting out programmes on Saturday mornings and in May

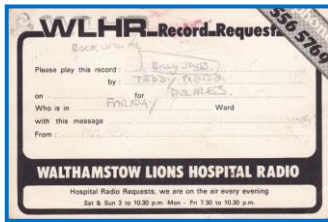
1976 the 'Wednesday Magazine' started with Alan Thompson. It ran in this form until April 1978 and guests included Ken Dodd, Cliff Richard, Kiki Dee and Marty Wilde (pictured).



November 1976 and plans were drawn-up to put Chingford Hospital on line after Mike Myers was admitted as a patient and noted that there was no radio service there at all.

July 1977 saw a special Wimbledon tennis programme presented by Chris Martin and Steve Donnelly and the first (and last for some years) members' newsletter.

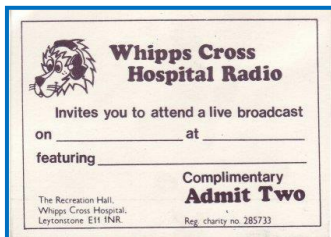
In September a new Wednesday night 'Newline' show with Alan Thompson and John James began. It closed just six weeks later following a row over the telephone costs, but a new 'Arts' show started on Sundays, presented by Martin Stone.



To replace the 'Wednesday Magazine' in January 1978 'Down Your Ward' re-started with Geoff Hemming, John Precious and John Beck. They went to the wards, supplied the 2p pieces and a phone trolley to put patients on the air. A nightly five-minute 'Sportsbreak'



programme reported on the day's sports news and a sports programme ran on Saturday afternoons between 3-6pm.

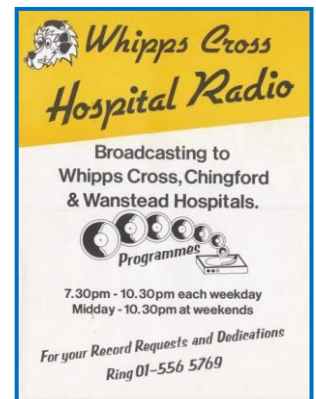


In November the first live OB 'concert' was broadcast from the Recreation Hall with the Loughton Players. In December one of the off-air feeds was changed from Radio 2 to BBC Radio London but with IRN news in the evenings. The feeds later reverted to Radio 2 and Radio 4.

In 1977 a Walthamstow Lions/ WXHR constitution was written and adopted by the committee which comprised: Mike Myers - chairman, Norman Spencer - treasurer, Paul Noble - chief technician, Ian Betteridge - programme controller, Alan Thompson - PRO, Mo Stone - asst. PRO, Chris Uphill - internal publicity, Steve Todd/Terry Hooper - disco, Mike Jones - personnel, Ray Dudley - secretary, Martin Stone - library, Anthony Faulkner and Chris Martin.

6. CHINGFORD AND WANSTEAD

In March 1978 a regular newsletter for patients was tried but only lasted one issue due to the cost of duplication. Later in July the feed to Chingford Hospital was finally connected. It was simply a parallel of the feed to Whipps Cross and the Post Office line costs were paid for from station funds. To mark the event the Pearly Kings and Queens talked to 'Monday Magazine' presenter Steve Donnelly (later editor of Walthamstow Guardian & Gazette). On-air bingo on Saturday nights proved popular with a cash prize of £9 - cards costing just 10p.



Also in 1978 Wanstead Hospital came on line (pictured). Once again it was a



feed of the same programmes as Whipps Cross and again the cost of the line was met by the station. During the year an approach was made to the Whipps Cross management for new accommodation within the hospital as the wooden huts were distinctly unsound. Little help was forthcoming and a move did not seem likely. A possible site under George Ward was examined but to no avail. In fact it was to be ten years before a move took place.

By 1979 the station was broadcasting 40 hours a week to Whipps, Wanstead and Chingford Hospitals. The mobile disco was going well, charging £30 for an evening and there was a regular Saturday night booking at the Warren restaurant in Waltham Abbey. It is interesting to note that by 1983 the disco was generating an income of several thousands of pounds a year. In October 1979 an Old Tyme Music Hall with the Sunnyside Players was broadcast from the Recreation Hall.

At around this time the 'Contact' programme was started as an improved request show. Messages were recorded from patients and played to relatives who could not visit via the telephone, and they responded. The linking was highly successful and calls were made around the world, at some cost. It was a big step forward from using 2p pieces in a telephone ward trolley and was eventually



superseded by a live radio microphone. Graham Oliver (pictured) was a frequent presenter. The station's first cartridge 'jingle' machine was bought. A 40-minute video of the station was made which was rather crude but served as a forerunner for a more professional video made ten years later and was shown to other voluntary groups.



In January 1980 an OB line was connected to the Orient Football Club ground for commentary on Saturday afternoons. The line was funded by the club itself and has been ever since with consistent match coverage.

Meanwhile morale among the volunteers was reported to be low because of poor studio equipment and a lack of headphones in the wards. A newer van was bought for the disco and then in July 1980 another new self-op desk, again built by Paul Noble, was installed into a new Studio 3 which was in fact the very original hut pushed onto the side of the large hut, patched-up and knocked-through. A visit by Patrick Jenkin MP and the mayor marked the opening of the new Studio 3 (pictured with Mike Jones in



the chair). The existing Studio 1 was dismantled and some 'squaring-up' of the walls saw Studio 2 created for interviews, leaving a space at the far end for a new Studio 1 as well.



The very first edition of a Whipps Cross magazine was produced by Authorised Publications (with a donation to the station of £50) for free distribution to patients. It was rather crude and not very interesting.

It was decided that the station's adopted cat, Sandy a seemingly stray ginger tom, should no longer be fed! Sandy died in 1989 so the lack of food was clearly not serious but certainly the air felt fresher. Luckily the studios were close to the canteen.



7. A MAJOR CHANGE - 1982

After negotiations with the Walthamstow Lions Club, Whipps Cross Hospital Radio became a registered charity in its own right, though Mike Myers remained as Chairman. A new constitution was adopted on 2nd October 1982 and the official handover was on 12th November 1982 at the Lions Charity Ball at Chingford Assembly Hall, although the station was actually registered as a charity in July 1982. The charity number allocated was 285733. During 1982 Chingford Hospital became geriatric only (and later closed altogether). The station reluctantly withdrew its service as the line rental had risen to an impossible £347pa and the listening audience was expected to drop dramatically.

The refreshed station logo was designed at around this time incorporating the original lion and the Whipps Cross 'towers' – a familiar sight over Leytonstone.



In April 1983 Geoff Hemming broadcast live from Woolworths in Walthamstow to publicise the 'Help a Whipps Cross Child Appeal'.

8. THE FIRST MARATHON

June 1983 marked the first Round Britain Marathon Drive (subsequently an annual event) - the idea of Peter Dowsett. A Ford car loaned by Gates of Woodford was driven 1200 miles around Britain with four

drivers and called in at ILR stations on the way. Money raised came from personal and commercial sponsorship.



Marks & Spencer donated £1,000 and this was used to buy a radio mic system for live ward interviews. An unsuccessful application for a grant was made to Waltham Forest Council. At this point the volunteers numbered 47. The Committee comprised: Ian Betteridge (vice chairman), Paul Noble, Sheila Tickell, Pete Dowsett, Terry Hooper, Charles Dickenson, Mike Jones, Phil Hughes, Geoff Bolden, Norman Spencer, Christine Spencer (secretary) and Bob

Bruton. The librarian was Linda Gooderam. At a meeting of the committee the principle of an annual subscription was rejected (see later). It was felt that resources were being spread too thinly with consequent absenteeism and poor quality programmes. Therefore the committee decided to reduce the 40 hours of broadcasts each week, in order to improve the quality. Evening programmes were reduced from 3 hours to 2 and there were reductions at the weekends.



The 1984 Marathon drive included the now customary visits to other radio stations, while back at Whipps Cross an escapologist performed for the patients of Mary Ward during the religious programme. The reasons for this stunt are now lost. The Marathon in 1985 raised £750.

In an unpleasant incident two members were asked to resign after an alleged misuse of the telephone for private calls and the loss of some records. Another previous member had been asked to resign in 1975 for alleged abuse of the phone but this type of incident has thankfully been very rare over the years

9. THEFTS.. BUT A MOVE AT LAST IN 1991

In May 1986 the mobile disco and its van (later recovered) were stolen from outside the home of disco manager Nigel Grist. The equipment was not insured and could not be replaced. The disco service was therefore abandoned and Nigel resigned. The Marathon went ahead in June (drivers: Mike Baldock, Simon Ingate, Clare Dawkins and Michelle Hatwell) and culminated in a concert in the Recreation Hall given by the Figaro Operatic Society.



The 1987 Marathon Drive gave away a prize of a holiday for two in France. During it Brian Gates opened the new Studio 1 comprising a heavily modified ex-BBC type B desk. Drivers were: Julie Heath, John Doyle, Adrian Monks and Keith Hemming and another concert by the Figaro Operatic Society was also held. The new Studio 1 meant that the station now had two self-op desks with an interview studio between them.

August 1987 and the station's first CD player was stolen from engineer Terry Hooper's car parked outside the studio. After publicity in the local newspaper, an Ilford hi-fi shop donated a replacement.

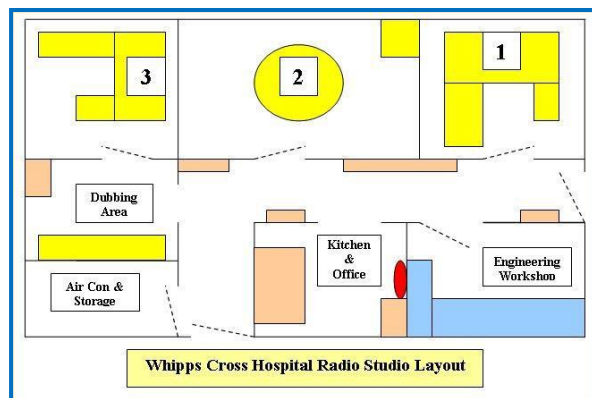
And then on October 27th 1987, with the new Studio 1 only recently completed, Stephen Curtis (of the hospital management) finally gave the go ahead for the hand over of the old 'Animal House' under 'D' block. It was to be another year before the keys were actually passed over and work could begin on a new studio complex - the most challenging project the station had yet undertaken. The area was a tip!



In March 1988 with the offer of the new premises a £10,000 appeal fund was launched to move the entire station to the new area. The money was raised with the help of grants from Waltham Forest Council (£11,000) and The League of Friends (£3,000), and many smaller fund-raising events. Work started that September to build 4 studios, an office, a library and a technical area. Electrical work and some building work were contracted out but all other work was done by members with new mixing desks (ex-BBC Radios Norfolk and Cambridge), tape machines etc. The design was by Paul Noble, with the main installation by Phil Hughes and Terry Hooper, while most of the interior work was done by John Doyle and Terry Warren.

The first trial programme was broadcast from the new area in May 1991 and the transfer from the old studios was completed two months later. The old green huts were demolished in January 1994 to make way for more car parking space and eventually extra wards.

In July 1991 Whipps Cross Hospital Radio joined NAHBO (National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations), later renamed the HBA - Hospitals Broadcasting Association. Then in October Mike Myers stepped down as chairman, since he had moved out of the area. He was made honorary president and Ian Betteridge became the new chairman.



10. A NEW OPENING

On Friday February 14th 1992 Wanstead Hospital closed and Whipps Cross Hospital Radio was back where it started 22 years previously broadcasting to just one hospital, albeit with vastly improved studios, more experienced staff and better programmes. Whipps Cross itself became a Trust Hospital and from this point the hospital management became more helpful and accessible. Suddenly it seemed that the radio service was now appreciated not just by the patients.



On the 18th November 1992 the new studios were formally opened by Lord Patrick Jenkin at a reception attended by current and former members including Ralph Bernard and Ivor Gilbert.

During 1993 the technical improvements continued: a burglar alarm was installed, computerisation of the library was started, a small telephone system was put in, new CD players bought along with TV sets and a

satellite radio for the Supergold news service. The Phase 1 'S' block came on line with three new wards. Programmes continued with the station on the air for at least two hours each evening plus Saturday and Sunday afternoons - a total of 25 hours a week.

Listen!
The magazine for Whipps Cross Hospital Radio

For a request call us on 556-5769 or Int. ext. 5088

Whipps Cross Hospital Radio is here to brighten up your stay in hospital. It's a registered charity and supplies you with a weekly host of programmes for your listening pleasure.

The 1992 edition of the patient magazine was produced 'in-house' making a profit of £300. In that year Saturday volunteer Jane Evans brought down her 9-year-old step-daughter Amy who would later become famous as singer Amy Winehouse.

Whipps Cross Hospital Radio
Registered Charity No 285733
Broadcasting to the patients and staff of Whipps Cross Hospital

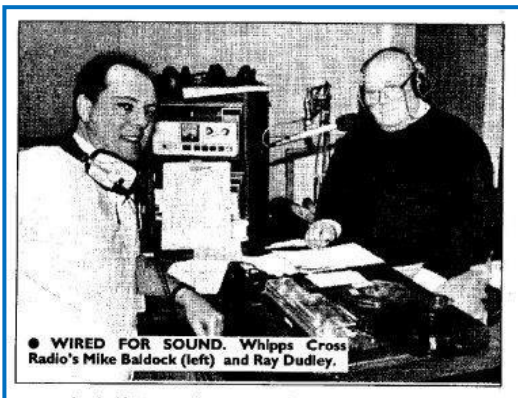
The Chairman and staff would be delighted if you are able to attend the official opening of our new suite of studios on **Wednesday 18th November 1992 at 7.00pm, to be opened by the Rt. Hon. The Lord Jenkin of Roding**

Buffet Provided R.S.V.P.

Saturday afternoons from January saw the return of a comprehensive sports programme, providing commentary on local games at Leyton Orient and coverage of away matches with a local interest. The programme ran from August through to June and continues currently. It was observed that nearly all members of the sports team were called John or Jon! Pictured are Ian Beach (not named John) and John Walker.



A systematic repair schedule was implemented in the wards by the station's own engineers to finally crack the problem of the faulty bedside headphone units. A formal membership scheme was finally introduced (£5 per year) and a members' newsletter re-started.



1994 and bingo returned on Sunday evenings with a live link-up to the wards and prizes of station mugs and cds. The Marathon drive proved highly successful with over £1300 raised which included new sponsorship prize money from the Nat West Bank. A new and colourful magazine was produced in conjunction with Hospital Radio Publications in station blue. It brought in £1,000 with 3,000 copies distributed to patients free. Membership still hovered around the 46 mark with a small turnover of staff. New telephone numbers were installed (0181 535 6997/6884 internal ext. 6048) and a pre-Christmas social event was organised for the first time in many years.

11. AN AWARD-WINNING STATION - 1995

During 1995 the station passed its 25th anniversary. A couple of new JAMS jingles and more promotional pens and mugs were ordered. An OB point for use with a small mixer was installed in the main corridor to broadcast a spring raffle event, which raised almost £400. Football commentary was extended to include West Ham and a sports OB unit was purchased along with commentator headsets.



The major event of the year was winning the BT/BBC Radio 2 Hospital Radio Awards. Whipps Cross was voted London Region winner and then

National Station of the year. Presenter Mike Jones (pictured) was voted personality of the year. The presentation was by singer Frankie Vaughan.



The judges' commendation said ' Sounded a real part of hospital life,



well put across, good children's interviews, good two-way interviews, good story-telling, the station with all the best traditions of hospital radio plus some unusual approaches'. With the trophy came prize money of £2,000, which paid for 8 cartridge machines to replace the aged Plesseys. Programme hours expanded slightly with some evenings now sustaining 3 hours and after a plea in the local paper for more volunteers, no fewer than 82 applications were received; most were non-starters. The station joined the Walthamstow Chamber of Commerce and the 1995 Marathon ventured abroad for the first time - to Disneyland Paris. By the end of the year membership had actually risen to 52 people.

12. MORE AWARDS - 1996

In January 1996 programmes expanded again following the influx of new members. The computerisation of the library was completed with a terminal in Studio 1. The new Phase 2

'S' Block wards were connected by station engineers after the building contractors failed to complete the job. The Chapel was also wired back to the studio and a radio talkback system was established to enable helpers in the wards to hear the output on portable receivers (447 MHz). Half a dozen new cassette recorders were bought for the dubbing studio along with 1000 promotional key rings.



Another major prize was won for the station at the BT Awards when Ian Betteridge (pictured) was voted National Personality of the year (£500).

A new display cabinet was provided for all these prizes. In June a belated 25th anniversary dinner was held with members past and present enjoying an excellent evening, complete with spoof awards at Chasneys in Chingford.

The Rally once again took place though later than usual, in September. Since Gates had closed, the car was provided by Hancock Ford. It was poorly supported and this year would be the end of the road. Following the recent awards and anniversary the hospital management held a reception in honour of the station and presented £1000 worth of outdoor PA equipment. As usual a corridor raffle and the fete for the Baby Boost Appeal took place - this year in good weather. The Nat West Bank branch in the hospital closed as did Claybury Hospital in November. Amongst voices heard on the air, Anthony Wedgewood Benn and Terry Venables.

13. YET MORE AWARDS & MORE PROGRAMMES - 1997

The station jingles were finally compiled onto a CD, after many promises and with the addition of video recorders in a newly-completed Studio 4, routine recording and archiving of programmes was possible. All the station Revox tape machines were replaced with more advanced Studer models and the old ones sold-off. A high-speed CD copier and Walkman cassette recorder were also purchased during the year. With funding from the League of Friends and help from hospital engineers, the Observation Ward was wired-up for radio - another 12 beds on line. At the end of the year the old Recreation Hall was demolished - it was the site of several outside broadcasts in the early 1980's - and became car parking. A station post box was installed in the main corridor for letters, requests and sweet wrappers.



For the first time a public Easter Grand Draw was organised with donated prizes to replace the Marathon Car Rally. The main fundraising event of 1997 itself, the League of Friends garden fete, was hit by the funeral of Diana Princess of Wales but still managed to raise £800 with the aid of a cash-doubling scheme from Barclays Bank. The station also provided the PA for a charity football match held in May, which raised £340.

There were more awards at the annual BT ceremony for Whipps Cross: London Region Station of the year and Best Special Event (the 1996 Christmas Carol Service). These two awards brought in a further £1000. The 1997 carol service was also broadcast.



Regular Studio Manager meetings were restarted with some success and the station arrived on the Internet with its own e-mail address: WXRADIO@Bettys.demon.co.uk. More give-away pens were ordered - this time blue lettering on white and a new edition of the magazine was published, giving an estimated £2,000. Station funds remained healthy despite on-going replacement of equipment.

The successes of the year were marred when Charles Owen died after nearly 20 years with the station.



14. THE STATION GOES ONTO FM - 1998

After a staff survey the year saw the station take out its first one-month Restricted Service Transmitter Licence on 87.7 FM during the summer of 1998. The signal reached from Chingford to Epping and Wanstead to Tower Bridge and the event tied in with the 50th anniversary of the NHS. Members worked round the clock to sell advertising, record interviews, book guests, present shows and make adverts.

At the end of it more than fifty local people were interviewed on air and the feedback was very positive. It gave the station a clearer idea of how to brand itself, despite some muttering by members. The total cost was around £5,000 but

the event eventually showed a profit of £600 - half of which was donated to the hospital.

Advertisers included Metlock Printers, Bailey Garner Cars, The Curry Queen, Gates, Burns Brett Insurance and Spitalfields Market and the ratecard was £25 per spot. The most spent by one advertiser was £500.

The programme schedule was round the clock and weekdays were:

6-9am Breakfast with Mike Jones	9am -12 Good Morning with Lucy Reeve
12-2pm Pete Dowsett's Pantry	2-4pm Afternoon Delight Gennie Pearson
4-7pm Drivetime Jon Emmins	7 -9pm Down Your Ward
9-11pm Late Show Ian Betteridge	11pm Round Midnight Mal Wayne

Weekends included shows from Ray Dudley, John Doyle, Peter Martin, Tony Jenkins, John Walker, Stephanie Hill, Phil Hughes and Ian Beach.



Friday evenings had to close for most of the year due to staff shortages.

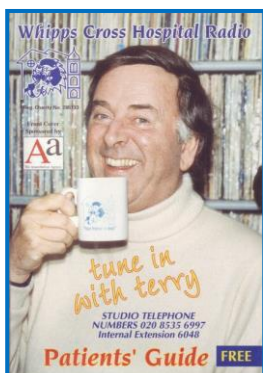
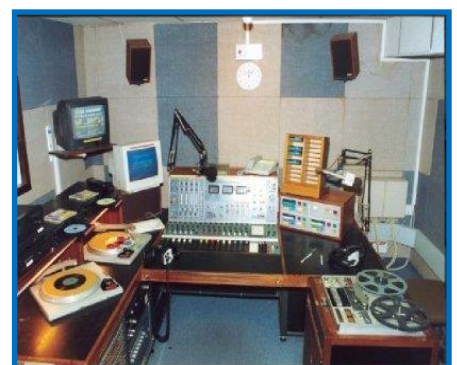
However, two members were offered their own show on a new commercial station in Cambridge. Ten members left the station but more joined to replace them. A grand raffle (licensed by the local authority) raised £1,500 and included a wind-up radio as a prize. But a wet fete only raised £200. The Chingford Ladies Circle donated £300 and an application was made to the Lotteries Small Grants Committee to buy a new multimedia computer. This was approved in January 1999. A transmission processor was installed to raise volume levels in the wards and more wards were renovated and for the first time Byron Ward was brought up to scratch.

Tv production company, Talkback, hired the studios for a comedy sketch (seen on BBC2) and paid £400 for the use. Jane Davies from the Trust was invited to be an honorary member of the station. Late in the year an arson attack in the basement corridor burnt through the transmission cable, putting the station off-air for a day (the first day lost due to a technical fault since 1989). A fax machine and line were added to the studio - 0181 535 6493.

At the annual BT awards the station was runner-up in two categories, Best Non-Music Programme and Best Special Event. This brought the total of awards to nine in four years.

15. THIRTY YEARS ON AIR AND THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The summer of 1999 saw the 30th anniversary of the station's founding – which went completely unnoticed. But the station was awarded a lottery grant of £1900 for a computer – with digital editing, which proved a boon throughout the year. A number of live music concerts were recorded at local venues to provide a stack of programmes for use during a one week RSL later in 1999. The Trust held a volunteer's evening to thank all the groups within the hospital and the station handed over £500 for the Pathology Lab funds. A magazine distribution point was installed in the main corridor which ensured a steady flow to visitors.



The second RSL held for one week in August was funded by the Trust and was combined with a Trust open day and fete. The 7-day run was more manageable but the first 2 days were blighted by nearby pirates. Programmes were more varied this time with a wide spread of guests and recorded concerts.

At the end of the year, long-standing Treasurer John Doyle decided to stand down from his post.

Another new magazine featured Terry Wogan and finally a cooling system was added to the ventilation plant. More jingles were purchased from US company JAM as the station was gradually using the simpler name of 'Whipps Cross Radio'.

The station arrived on the Internet with an interactive website at www.WXHR.co.uk It moved into the new millennium with just about enough staff but with a stronger programming format and an even stronger technical base.

At the Annual BT Awards the station was again only runner up – in the London Region category. Due to falling numbers of young in-patients it was decided to end the long-running children's Jolly Roger Club programme on Sundays. In its place came a revived Patients' Top 20 chart show.

The schedule was now consistently 8-11pm Monday-Friday, 2.30-10pm Saturday, 2-11pm Sunday and included both Saturday and Sunday sports programmes (during the winter).

16. INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The year 2000 was probably characterised by a certain amount of apathy as staffing again became more difficult. Fridays were off-air for most of the year and Sunday Sport became erratic. However, the basic pattern of 8pm Focus Programme, 9pm Requests, 10pm Late Show was maintained during the week.

It was a quiet year financially with no fundraising and no League of Friends fete (also having staffing difficulties). Due to heavy investment in ventilation plant the station showed a rare deficit for the year of £1,200. With the new WXHR station web site, the occasional e-mail request appeared and up to 100 hits per month were recorded. Another new magazine was produced with Charlie Dimmock on the cover. Paul's hospital shop closed and a new operator was appointed.



On the technical front a system for routinely recording the output onto cassettes was installed as well as minidisc machines in the studios. Also a second National Lotteries grant (of £2,000) was procured for the purchase of OB recording equipment. BT changed phone numbers again so we were now 020 8535 6997 and the radio mic system was upgraded to give better ward coverage. The studios got a lick of paint for the first time since they were opened in November 1992.

A survey of all 50 members was undertaken to see who joined when. Also on the personnel front, two members who met at the station announced their engagement – it was congratulations to Pete Dowsett (pictured) and Johanna Griffiths. And from curiosity corner it seems the Greenwich 0⁰ Meridian passes within 200 yards of the studios!

17. THE YEAR 2001 IN RETROSPECT

Calamity! In April asbestos was dislodged in the basement corridor which meant, apart from the fact that station members had been breathing it in for years, a sudden closing of access to the studios. The station was off the air for just under three weeks while entry through the back door was arranged (which became the front door). This was the longest breakdown in the station's history. Just before the asbestos struck keys were obtained for a new storage area in the basement to replace the old rooms in the Nurses Home. Despite the asbestos that move was completed by Christmas.

One long-lost member (John Precious) returned after many years and Adrian Monks returned after a break of ten years but Terry Hooper (chief engineer) took a year-long sabbatical to move house. Peter Dowsett and Johanna Griffiths were married – the first station members to tie the knot! Ian Beach joined Capital Radio Sport and it prompted a list of previous members who had progressed to working in radio and TV professionally (see appendix).



The committee dropped to just seven members and several people had to be co-opted, although the AGM was unusually well attended. However, the treasurer (Liz Barham) resigned and the books were handed to the chairman and station manager to look after.

Another RSL and raffle to fund it were suggested but the fundraising side proved impossible and the idea was dropped. However, an application to the Lotteries Commission (the station had made two previous and successful applications) was submitted for £5,000 to buy a computer playout system. The scheme would provide a 24-hour service of music and programmes from the Whipps Cross studios – ‘Whipps Cross 24’. The application was successful and equipment was ordered from British software company PSquared in November.



During the year Forest Healthcare Trust became The Whipps Cross University Trust and plans were confirmed for a rebuild of the entire hospital within 7 years (alas not!). The hospital held an open day in September, which raised some £240 for station funds and also a much less successful volunteers’ day in December. The hospital management put in place a formal Volunteers’ Scheme which obliged all members to be vetted and recorded by the hospital management. No longer was the radio station a completely independent body.

A compressor was added to the radio mic feeds which considerably increased the audibility of the signals and several live music concerts were recorded for later transmission, most notably at Hobbs Cross Farm and Bancroft’s School (Gennie Pearson at the mixing desk).



Late in the year Friday evenings were restarted after a gap of some 18 months. Overall it was a year that started very much with key members treading water but as the year closed things were looking up both financially and for the forthcoming 24-hour service.

18. 2002 - TECHNICAL PROGRESS

The computer system to run the 24 hour playout system was duly purchased and many hours were spent configuring, loading music and jingles and preparing the system which would allow the station to be a solid presence within the hospital.

Staff were issued with Whipps Cross Volunteer polo shirts and gilets as a formal volunteer scheme came into effect. It did not seem to deliver any real benefits to the station, and indeed it took longer to process new members. (Pictured Ian Parker.)



The committee fell to seven members with the chairman and station manager maintaining financial duties. Saturday nights closed after staffing numbers dropped too low and remained shut hence forward. It was felt the playout system would mop up any nights that could not be manned.

A new, all-colour magazine was delivered, with David Essex on the cover, and it was expected to generate £2,000. Station members visited Stoke Mandeville to upload music tracks for the new computer and were staggered to learn that they raised around £12,000 per year. And then IRN decided to charge £100 per year for their service – plus VAT.



Expert engineer Derek Elstob joined the team.

In May the shop franchise changed hands again to United News and moved further along the main corridor.

A new supply of promotional carrier bags was ordered although nobody could recall when the last batch was made, but it seems it was over 10 years previously. The website was given a wash and brush-up with more sound clips.

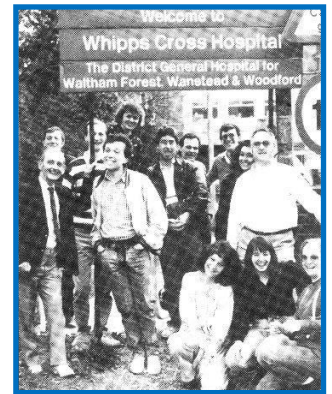


19. THE STATION GOES 24 HOURS - 2003

Long-serving member David Lyon died suddenly. He had been a mainstay of the Christian programme for many years. John Newstead from Hospital Radio Publications – who had produced the magazine for some years, also died suddenly. Happily the magazine carried on in the hands of his widow, Michele. On a happier note chairman Ian Betteridge celebrated his 60th birthday and station manager, Phil Hughes his 50th – Ian looked younger. New light blue ‘volunteer’ sweatshirts were provided by the hospital and they gently matched the station’s own dark blue branding. On a blistering day in June there was another hospital open day to mark 100 years. A special OB programme was mounted and the station’s stall took over £300 but it was not well attended. In Studio 2 a string quartet was successfully recorded for a commercial cd release. A donation from the relatives of a patient who heard a favourite Matt Monro record arrived – for £250. Presenter Jon Emmins seemed quite happy!

Progress was made to transfer to cd, and then discard, vinyl 7” singles and a large number were consigned to the great studio in the sky. Some had been on the shelves for 25 years. A new ward (Emergency Medical Centre) was connected but the hospital could find no headphones.. roll on Patientline.

Phonographic Performance Ltd began to make noises about charging hospital radios for playing records and for holding computer databases of music. Charges of around £100 a year were anticipated – not with pleasure.



The momentous day arrived 14th December when the station finally went 24 hours with a service of music, trailers and voice links from presenters, sounding very like a live station. Programmes continued live in the evenings with the new service initially running on network 1 and Radio 4 running continuously on network 2.

There was the Mike Jones breakfast show followed by Gennie Pearson, Ian Betteridge and John Costello and Steve Harvey overnight. Weekends included John Emmins, John Doyle, Pete Dowsett, Ian Beach and Nina Goswami.

Almost coincidentally the installation of Patientline began with 15 pay tv channels and 6 free radio channels, 440 beds would eventually be equipped. WXHR was to be on radio channel 1 followed by BBC Radio 4, 2 and Asian, Heart and Classic FM. Headphone maintenance would become a thing of the past.

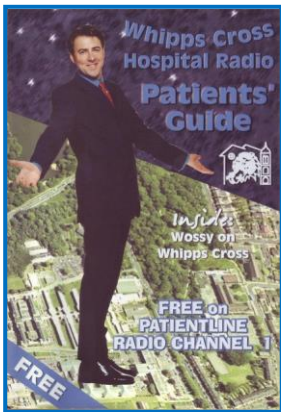
20. PART OF PATIENTLINE - 2004

So early in 2004 the Station became part of Patientline on Channel 1. The company were helpful in establishing the connection and the WX blue logo appeared on the bedside display screen. It was possible to measure audience reception of individual channels and for a week in June it was astonishing to report that the station came third in the statistics with a total of 9174 hours - behind ITV and BBC1. The number *800 was made available as a freecall to the studio from bedside units. A speaker was installed in the main entrance to entertain the staff and patients there, 24 hours a day.. often playing to nobody out of hours!



A patient taking part in the Sunday evening Down Your Ward show was chatting on the radio mic and volunteered that she had really enjoyed the Late Night Classics show the previous night. This was John Costello’s automated programme. She was unaware that it was automated but said she really enjoyed the music and it had helped her to sleep. Was that a compliment?

Gradually more tracks and musical features were added to the playout system to make a more interesting listen, from a sixties hour, a country hour, love songs hour and comedy hour to a three-in-a-row Motown selection. More and more the service sounded like a full-blown radio station. The IRN news feed changed satellite to Hotbird and a new receiver was purchased. The new service was a direct feed from IRN rather than via Sunrise radio and also provided weekend sports clips. Ben Cooper (Fridays) established a link with the local Odeon Cinema and a fortnightly competition to win tickets was established. An OB was broadcast from the Chapel to mark the 50th anniversary of the League of Friends.



Member Yvonne Gravette died in November after a long illness. She originally became interested in hospital radio when she was a patient in Whipps and Mike Jones interviewed her. She had been a part of the Tuesday team and always came to fund-raising events.

During the year a new magazine was published with Jonathan Ross on the cover. It brought in £2094, which was a record amount. However, HBA Insurance Services closed and forced a move to a more expensive provider.

21. A QUIET YEAR - 2005

The 24-7 playout system settled in and programmes were refined to complete the schedule. The system proved remarkably stable with just one failure due to a power supply fault. Speaker feeds were established in outpatients, much to the pleasure of management and the maternity unit was online for the first time in a decade with Patientline units installed. Patientline decided to re-number channels and WXHR landed on channel 45, like every other hospital station in the UK. This was later corrected.



Long-time member Ray Dudley died during the year. He had joined in 1976 and had been active for many years as part of the Saturday night team. Ian Parker took up the post of librarian and joined the committee along with Petula Andre. The committee now comprised Pete Dowsett, Ben Cooper, Terry Hooper, Phil Hughes, Mike Jones, Jon Emmins, Ian Beach, Ian Parker, Petula Andre and Chairman Ian Betteridge.

There were still problems attracting and retaining new staff, exacerbated by the inefficient volunteers scheme run by the hospital. The hospital found itself stuck with the PFI scheme to rebuild and then suspended the whole process – it was not revived. Phonographic Performance finally instigated their licence charges of £150 per annum, which was in addition to the existing IRN fee of £120 pa.



Several OBs were mounted to record concerts at local churches (both summer and Carol concerts) and a social event was held in the summer – the first for several years.

22. THE YEAR WAS 2006

June saw the third anniversary of the station going 24-7 with essentially only the one failure, though one listener rang in to complain that we should announce the records more often! Film of the Fortnight (in association with the Odeon South Woodford) survived the year but enthusiasm rather dwindled. Some staffing problems re-appeared with Tuesdays still proving to be short on numbers. A number of concerts were recorded thanks a new digital recorder both with the Epping Band (pictured) and also a local church. The Chart Show (with Ian Parker) ran with a fresh edition every month based on listener requests and proved to be a mainstay of Sunday evenings.



John Precious joined the Committee to undertake a review of training but there was very little other business. The station was still registering as the most popular radio channel on Patientline (the list was

topped by BBC1 and ITV, then 4 other tv channels). An Internet PC was finally established in Studio 4 for sports results and general access with flat screen monitors now in most areas.

The Hospital had accrued huge debts (along with many other NHS trusts) and a major battle was joined with the overall future of the hospital. Some change was expected.

23. CLOSE TO 40 YEARS - 2007

During the year, and after several major studies and consultations, it was decided Whipps Cross would not close but remain substantially the same. There would be a rebuild of some of the old structure and more day operations as finances dictated and treatments advanced. Clearly this was good news for the hospital radio; a sigh of relief all round.

The year saw a general technical renovation of desks and equipment though a lottery application for extra OB equipment was rejected on administrative grounds. A high-speed cd copier was obtained as cassettes for patient recordings were phased-out and the station started to supply cd copies of interviews. Patientline hit choppy waters financially and the general state of headphones became a cause for concern – again. The League of Friends kindly agreed to fund headphones as Patientline tried to charge £1 to patients. Speakers were installed in the canteen for the benefit of staff. (Pictured engineer Terry Hooper who left suddenly and inexplicably in 2013.)



Getting new members was still a slow process with CRB checks now required and many prospective members drifting away before the paperwork caught up. Chandra, a new hospital administrator was appointed at the end of the year, to help solve the problem. Chairman Ian Betteridge was struck down with a form of cancer that incapacitated him and sadly past member Stephanie Hill died in September. She had been a mainstay of Saturday nights before leaving to travel the world.



We were reminded that singer Amy Winehouse was the step-daughter of Jane Evans, also a Saturday night stalwart. Amy came to the station many times as a child while her step-mum did a programme, sitting colouring quietly in the corner.



On the programme front there were several OB recordings and a proper Late Show was scheduled on the playout system with Petula Andre between 10-11pm to run as a shadow for live programmes. Yet another magazine delivered over £2000 of income.

24. 2008 CAME AND WENT

Whipps Cross featured in an 8-part documentary series ‘The People’s Hospital’ but it concentrated on the nursing side of life. Patientline went into liquidation and was taken over by Hospedia who continued in the same vein.

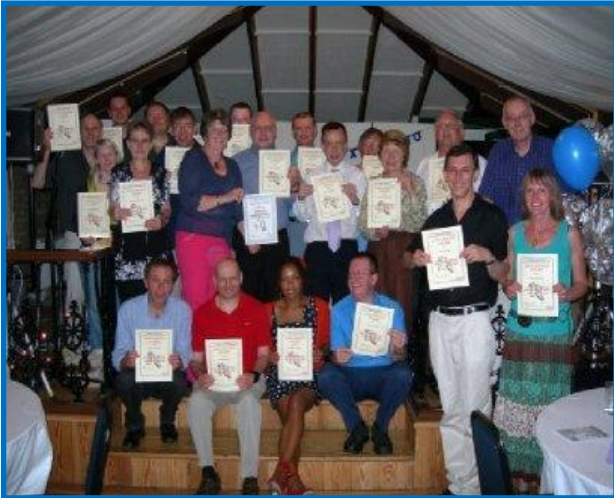


Work was started on a new playout system to replace the 5-year old server and also to extend the system to studio playout. It proved to be more complex than expected and was not finished by Christmas. However, the lottery grant was re-applied for and granted. It funded a £5,000 Vortex system for broadcasting high quality OBs and sports commentaries via a telephone line. A number of live music recordings were completed during the year and Mal Wayne undertook to copy the entire CD collection to a digital hard drive.

Recruitment stalled again this year but efforts were made to restart the process and get a proper grip on it. Another new magazine with Rod Stewart on the front arrived and was agreed to be the best yet.

25. THE 40th YEAR - 2009

An event was organised in July to mark the 40th anniversary of the station. Members old and new remembered some favourite moments and there was a good amount of press coverage. Long service certificates were presented by the President of the HBA. Held at the Sir Alfred Hitchcock Hotel it comprised a quiz as well as much socialising.



A new recruitment system generated 7 new members across the year with more in the wings. At last numbers were growing again with 41 registered members by the year end.

Another new magazine arrived with Rod Stewart on the cover and the service was expanded into more waiting room and public areas within the hospital.

The live music team recorded various concerts including the Jeff Short Swing Band and a concert at Chelmsford Cathedral which was syndicated to Chelmsford and Southend Hospital Radios.

The news service contract changed hands from ITN to SKY News (though still administered by IRN) and lost a minute and some quality in the process. An automated 'shadow' Down Your Ward programme was established on 24-7 and provided good back up in the slot. Due to a lack of members Mondays closed (as well as Saturdays) but John Precious quickly established Mondays as a training evening and by the end of the year live programmes had re-started.



With 40 years of programmes now completed it felt that the station was on a firm footing, had excellent relations with the Hospital Trust and looked set fair for the next years. The major risks to the service remain the turnover of membership - lining up enough committed members for the coming years and a slight worry about the future of Hospedia, who provide the bedside entertainment systems and whose stability can be by no means certain. Perhaps that is a worry for the future as the very nature of health care changes and the hospital continues to evolve.

To survive 40 years is an achievement and to prove it Phil Hughes and Ian Betteridge posed for a picture.

26. ANOTHER DECADE BEGINS - 2010

Membership gradually crept up to around 46 during 2010. Some members took part in the first fundraising event for a while at the Chigwell Roundtable May Fayre. Finances were still healthy enough not to warrant any serious fundraising.



The recording team produced a number of high quality CDs of concerts for sale and this proved a useful revenue stream. The playout system was finally extended into the studios and with training became a normal part of the technical systems. New jingles were purchased from JAM in Dallas and much work was put into the 24-7 system to increase its effectiveness and flexibility.

Work began on re-designing and updating the station logo and designing a new website.

The chart of the year revealed few surprises:

1. Frank Sinatra - My Way
2. Nat King Cole - Unforgettable
3. Robbie Williams - Angels
4. Frank Sinatra - I've Got You Under My Skin
5. Luther Vandross - Dance With My Father
6. Bette Midler - The Wind Beneath My Wings
7. Chris De Burgh - Lady In Red
8. Stevie Wonder - I Just Called To Say I Love You
9. Abba - Dancing Queen
10. Bing Crosby - Pennies From Heaven

However, a remarkable message was left on the ansaphone:

Good morning I would just like to say how great your station is. I was at the hospital waiting for an appointment to be told it would be 55 minutes late, we were listening to your station which I think is fabulous, and all of a sudden Chan N Dave came on and everybody was singing. And it was hilarious and I just had to ring and say how great your music is and, oh, I would just love some of your tapes, I would love 'em. So thanks a lot, well thanks a million, thanks, bye bye.

That makes hospital radio worthwhile!

27. A LOT OF PROGRESS IN - 2011

After a long absence from the HBA awards two entries were submitted, an interview by Ben Cooper and a Carol concert recorded at Chelmsford Cathedral – which won a Silver (pictured).



The new logo was designed and agreed amid some lively discussion. Generally the feeling was that it was a more modern, digital-style image which would work well – though there were some who missed the nostalgic ‘towers’ of the original logo.



The new website was launched after the design was initiated by an external consultant commissioned by Phil Hughes. It had a clean, modern look and was produced



extremely cheaply. It was then taken up by station engineer Terry Hooper and much expanded to way beyond the original aspiration – with listen again features, a sports and an arts blog, Facebook and Twitter linkage and many pages of good quality content. It looked a highly professional site – the best anyone could see for a hospital station on the internet

Broadband internet connectivity was installed which enabled limited streaming of the station output to members and also access to a new digital online archive. Ian Parker marked 10 years of running Friday nights – as well as the record library, with an anniversary schedule and he introduced a new format for the Sunday Chart Show, with just a Top 10 requests chart along with other featured records. It meant the chart more accurately reflected the patient requests. The hospital also marked 10 years of the volunteers scheme and station members were able to attend the event with local MP, Iain Duncan Smith.



Sports coverage expanded with an excellent blog from new member Arun Emilion and the local match commentaries provided good coverage for patients. Fundraising events were supported at the Chigwell Fete in May and at a new Wood Street Community Funday in June. Both brought in money for the station but this was the first year for a long time when expenditure exceeded income – due to the costs of the website, internet connection, new jingles and quite a heavy spend on facilities such as new talkback receivers for the wards.

28. ANOTHER YEAR FLIES PAST - 2012

During the year the Trust merged with Barts and Newham and although Whipps Cross was subsumed into the new Barts Healthcare NHS Trust, the hospital's individual identity and therefore the radio station's, was retained. Jane Davies from the hospital management announced her departure. She had been a long-term supporter of the station, but she left with an OBE.



Following a return visit to the station after 40 years, it was sad to report that co-founder Ivor Gilbert died in November (*chs 1&2*). Ivor remarked on his visit how things had changed – indeed they had!

A new system to donate to the station via text was established as the station strengthened its support of social media through Facebook and Twitter links on the website. The station also benefitted by some £700 from charity token schemes at local Waitrose and ASDA stores. They provided substantial income in a year when other events were washed out by poor weather. The station also provided support at the 25th anniversary event of the Margaret Centre.

Two members achieved internships with BBC national radio but recruitment at the station itself slowed as too many 'passing' applicants were making initial contact but not completing to join the station. Member Jay Barnett had one of his short stories broadcast on Radio 4 which led to a new feature on Whipps Cross running his stories at 10.30 in the morning schedule. They nicely complemented the classic poems running after midnight and the classic comedy clips at lunchtime.



Two entries were submitted to the 2013 HBA awards. The end of year charts showed Frank Sinatra still being the most requested artist but Adele and Rihanna brought some welcome freshness to the list.

29. A YEAR OF SUCCESS AND SADNESS - 2013

Towards the end of 2013 long-serving presenter and chairman Ian Betteridge died. He had been a mainstay and great ambassador of the station since 1975 and was widely thought to be one of the most entertaining presenters with a wonderful radio voice. The chairman's seat passed to another long-standing member, Mike Jones.



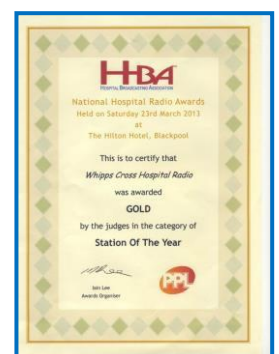
On the positive side the station won two gold trophies at the annual HBA awards – Best Interview for Jon Emmins' package on Chingford Model Engineering Club (handed over by Ken Bruce) and also Station of the Year with a 15 minute compilation of the station's output. The entry attracted praise from the judges:



'This features the best start to an entry I've ever heard. The presenters have warmth and energy, whilst the station clearly has a lot of patient interactivity. Local sports and concerts feature heavily. In an age when there's so much radio out there, this station is really punching above its weight, and deserves to win the top prize.'



A celebratory social event and schedule of programmes was organised in April. The station had won the award previously in 1995 when there was a cash prize. This time it was more about the honour and a trophy which presented to Jon Emmins by HBA Ambassador Ken Bruce.



Several other long-standing members left the station during the year which naturally led to questions about the future of the station. However, new members joined in their place and the station's output continued confidently. The Wednesday Focus programme began a regular link-up with journalists on the local Guardian & Gazette paper.

The station maintained its support for Chigwell Fete and the Wood Street Fun Day and also ran a stall at the Barts Trust open day at Whipps Cross on a bleak September Saturday. It established a charity ebay site to dispose of old equipment and had some immediate success. The studio desks' woodwork was renovated, a new kitchen was installed – the first significant remedial work since the area was occupied in 1992, and a new magazine was published with local fashion model Lisa Snowdon on the cover.

And finally a lovely plaudit arrived by email:

I spent 27 days in the company of wonderful people. The Hospital radio kept me sane, especially John Costello when the early hours dragged and the demons were close. (joking). ..It was fun phoning in and listening to requests from my daughter Marcia and my lads. I shall be ever grateful you were always there. kindest wishes to you all, Mary (Puff Granny)



30. FORTY FIVE YEARS ON - 2014

There was no celebration in particular and it was a quiet year generally. Football commentary and coverage continued to excel and eight new people joined with new presenters for Sunday Classics and Sunday Sport. Long-standing members Pete & Johanna Dowsett moved to Cornwall after more than 30 years' service and presenter and chairman Mike Jones remembered his own 40 years at the station.



Hospedia (previously Patientline) began to supply listening figures from the bedside consoles. The year began with 5,600 recorded hours listening to WXHR per week which settled back to 2,600 after a change in methodology.

Nonetheless the station was at between 4th and 7th place nationally. The station also recorded between 72% and 64% of all radio listening at Whipps Cross – 2nd and 4th places nationally. With only 420 bedside units Whipps Cross was doing exceptionally well compared with hospitals having many more bedside consoles. Visiting patients was seen to be key to the success.



The Chigwell Fete was rained-off, but for the first time the Wood Street Fun Day was dry and successful. Finances were very positive with a surplus of nearly £900 for the year. The November AGM was well-attended, with a social drink afterwards. It was decided to progress towards internet broadcasting to reflect the changing medical landscape and to broaden the station's reach. A change to the charitable objects and constitution was agreed in principle.

To mark the centenary of World War 1 a package was produced looking at the story of Whipps Cross during the war. The story mapped how the facility changed from a poor law infirmary into a general hospital as it treated over 6,000 injured soldiers. A plaque in the main corridor marks the visit of King George V and Queen Mary in 1917, during the war. Amazingly a film clip of a contemporary fund-raising event was unearthed on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5Y8OYEm2Wo>



31. STILL GOING STRONG - 2015

Andrew Fuller joined the committee to look after the new website and social media and devised an updated station logo. According to Hospedia our average daily audience was 42, some 10% of available

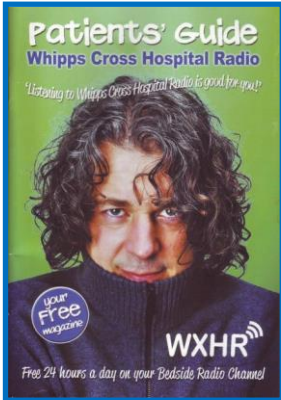
listeners (plus waiting areas and corridors) which was well above the national average. Internet streaming would improve that even further.

The station's Charity objects were updated to enable internet broadcasting:

PROVIDING A LOCAL BROADCASTING SERVICE FOR WHIPPS CROSS STAFF AND PATIENTS WITHIN THE HOSPITAL ITSELF AND WITHIN THE WIDER COMMUNITY. THE SERVICE PROVIDES ROUND THE CLOCK ENTERTAINMENT, MUSIC, NEWS, LOCAL SPORT, COMMUNITY AND HEALTH INFORMATION.



Technical facilities were set up and a completely new website designed commissioned to incorporate a pop-out radio player.



Two entries were made to the HBA awards and were shortlisted: a potted history of Whipps Cross during the First World War and also a promotion using clips from patients. The promotion won Gold in its category with the judges noting: *'Some of the listeners were an absolute gift for this promo! An amusing promo that met its brief.'* A new wall may be needed to display all the awards!

A fresh magazine with Alan Davies on the cover was published and two outside events were supported – the May Chigwell fete (sunshine) and the Wood Street Funday (rain). Membership numbers were steady with one leaving and one joining but long-standing member John Precious moved away to Wales.

32. INTERNET BROADCASTING, A MAJOR STEP - 2016

A major development in February when the station started to stream live on the Internet. The new website had been launched in January and the streaming facility was connected - a few presenters were initially concerned at 'being heard', but soon settled. As technology moved on, broadcasting to a wider Whipps Cross community became more significant. The new website itself looked very polished and web



manager, Andrew Fuller, took control of the style and content from the designer. The streaming triggered higher licensing rates from PRS and PPL but most hospital stations had to go down that road.



The online address had moved from .co.uk to .org.uk to better reflect the station's purpose.

Fundraising was minimal but money was released by the sale of surplus equipment via eBay. Station manager Phil Hughes noted that with no further specific fundraising the station could survive for another ten years, although with old hands naturally getting older, the issue would be replacing experienced volunteers. Numbers did actually remain steady though there continued to be a worry about the long-term relevance of hospital radio in the age of smart phones.

After several major failures of the aged playout computers, a project to upgrade was launched, which caused initial problems. There was some on-air impact but a new IT expert from Bedrock H.R. came on-board to install and manage the systems - a major coup. Technical support had been rather flaky as the long-serving engineer had left the station in 2013. Thankfully the 20-year-old library system was rescued and integrated onto the new computers. Nowadays radio stations are rather complex and need more support than just a new stylus for the record player.



Programmes continued reliably with plenty of requests and guests and one particular Friday guest made his mark...As West Ham moved to the Olympic Stadium technical issues arose with providing commentaries and again an investment in new equipment was required. The AGM agreed that was what savings were for although 2017 would underline the value of having solid savings.

33. MAJOR TECHNICAL UPGRADE - 2017

The major technical refurbishment continued with glitches and hiccups in the output. Lee Howe from Bedrock Hospital Radio (Queen's Hospital, Romford), tackled many problems as we lurched into Windows 10 and new software and equipment. It was apparent that the system, which was over 10 years old, needed a complete renewal.

Membership was fairly static with the typical 3 in and 4 out but so much falls on Phil Hughes' shoulders there is a real risk of disaster. Barts Trust flagged an application to build a new hospital again, probably starting in 8 years and with Hospedia's precarious business and a declining membership with expertise, it seems there is a limited life projection for this radio station. The same is probably true elsewhere.

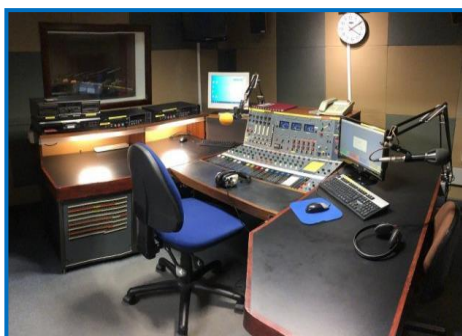
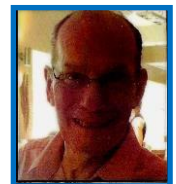


However, Ian Betteridge was finally replaced by Andrew Fuller on the automated afternoon show and generally the schedule held up. Sadly we lost long-time member Steve Harvey whose voice was left to grace the 3am-6am timeslot.

Sunday Sport presenters left at around the same time and back-up programmes were over used. Another new magazine was introduced with local actor, and Leyton Orient fan, Daniel Mays on the cover.

34. SETTLING DOWN AGAIN - 2018

After the technical traumas of last year, 2018 settled down to IT reliability and stability amongst members. Sadly the funeral took place in February of Mike Myers who, as chairman, had guided the station from its early days to a stand-alone charity. A head count revealed 34 active members with 4 dormant plus 2 specialist football commentators. The committee increased to 8 in number but older members were definitely getting older!



A couple of programmes marked the NHS 70th anniversary but otherwise there was little special output although as usual Christmas and Remembrance events were suitably reflected.

Bedside entertainment consoles from Hospedia were still poorly supported but the system nonetheless continued. Keeping the ship afloat was the priority in 2018. There was no further news of the re-development of the hospital site and Ed Sheeran proved to be the most requested artist of the year.

35. FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING - 2019

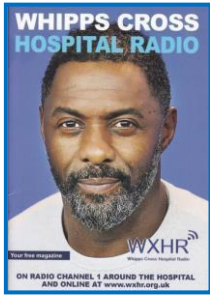
Remarkably the station was still very much on air after 50 years. A celebratory lunch for 60 past and current members was held at the Red Lion and many postings were put on Facebook and the station website. A presentation on the history of the station was shown and a smattering of local press coverage followed. It was agreed it was an excellent and appropriate event which covered its costs and it was a pleasure to see again ex-members, especially Paul Noble who pre-dated everyone, having joined the station in 1970.



A complete refresh of the website was carried out, a 'Donate' button added as well as this history. Presenter links were also refreshed on 24-7. More public discussions were taking place about re-building the hospital and in September it was announced that a brand new hospital would be built over the next 5 years. Details were sparse but this time it was felt likely to happen as the hospital struggled to cope with demand and its aged infrastructure. It seemed unlikely the station would be incorporated into a new build and it would be unlikely to have the effort to start new studios.



These are likely to be the last few years of Whipps Cross Hospital Radio.



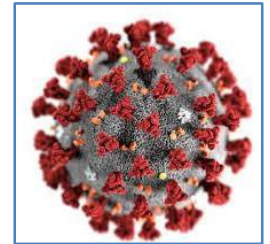
The 24th edition of the magazine was published with Idris Elba on the cover. Growing up close by he might have joined the station, having been a local disco DJ. The Sunday evening Down Your Ward show was the strongest request show on the station with up to 20 requests some weeks.

Reaching 50 had been a considerable achievement for a small charity and the impact significant for very many patients. It is thought around 250 volunteers had been involved in the station over those years all contributing time and enthusiasm.

Two entries were sent to the HBA Awards for the Best Promotion and also for a special programme marking the 50 Year anniversary.

36. THE YEARS OF COVID-19 - 2020

The hospital and station went into lockdown on 17th March and there were only a few live programmes over the rest of the year and the wards were closed to all visitors. However, automation ran continuously and included national silences and Christmas programming. Naturally recruitment collapsed during the year and it is expected membership numbers will have decreased by the time normal programmes can resume.



It was announced that a new hospital was now approved and in the planning/funding stage with an expected opening at the end of 2026. This would mark the likely closure of the radio station as the current premises would be demolished. By that time the relevance of hospital radio will probably have vanished.

The contract with Hospedia, who provide bedside entertainment consoles, was to come to an end and services would transfer to a new Wi-Fi system provided by Wi-FiSpark who have systems across the NHS. This expected roll over was delayed by the pandemic until next year. Maintenance of Hospedia units, and therefore listening to WXHR, shrank due to a lack of access and maintenance. The new system is expected to provide easier useage but will require patients to have smartphones and their own headphones.



The station website was hacked during the year and the opportunity was taken to refresh the content and sign-up with a new host and domain provider.

This has been a difficult year everywhere for everyone and many stations around the UK have simply closed. WXHR has held its head up and hopes to restart properly in the spring of 2021.

37. GOODBYE WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL RADIO – 2022

In 2021 only a few of the live programmes resumed, met with caution as various social distancing measures remained in place across the hospital. Many of the volunteers felt it was difficult to rebuild the station, without a direct link to the patients, and didn't return to the studio.

Throughout 2020/2021 the new Wi-FiSpark NHS Wi-Fi system had gone live across all of Barts Trust, WXHR being listed on the entertainment page as the hospital radio service across all five of the Barts Trust's hospitals sites.

The station streaming stats did see a small uplift as patients with their own devices found us from the various hospitals across the Trust, but these figures were much lower than the now defunct Hospedia system at Whipps Cross Hospital.

There were more listeners in the corridor of the Whipps Cross hospital, than on NHS Wi-Fi.



With preliminary works beginning on-site the hospital grounds for the

Future Whipps Cross Hospital, it became clear there would be no alternative way to reach patients on the wards, anything that could be installed would be a temporary measure, It's NHS WiFi or nothing.

With the new building there was no guarantee that WXHR would be re-homed or what, if any patient entertainment would be installed other than NHS WiFi.

Everything had turned again the station; The technical issues, impact of the pandemic, withdrawal of the bedside facilities, no guarantee of a place in the new hospital.

A decision was made that after 50 years, the station will be closing at the end of 2022.

To celebrate last year of Whipps Cross Hospital Radio volunteers produced a weekend of special programmes reflecting on the stations history serving the health community both within the hospital and the wider area over the last 50 years.

The last live programme broadcast on Sunday 25th September 2022, as part of the goodbye special, the station remained in automation until 31st December, where the station would fall silent.

Lee Howe from Bedrock Radio, who had been assisting us since 2017, suggested that Bedrock Radio should replace WXHR when the station closes at the end of the year, Therefore keeping a service on NHS WiFi for the patients across Barts Trust, and maintaining the corridor speakers at Whipps Cross Hospital.



A phased transition took place from Whipps Cross Hospital Radio to Bedrock Radio, starting in November 2022, when NHS WiFi was changed over to Bedrock Radio and finally in January 2023 Bedrock Radio replaced WXHR on the corridor speakers at Whipps Cross Hospital.

This marking the final end of Whipps Cross Hospital Radio.

With only formalities remaining of decommissioning equipment and dissolving the charity remaining.

Whipps Cross Hospital Radio thanks all the helpers, volunteers, supporters and the Trust at Whipps Cross who have supported the station.

Written & Researched by Phil Hughes

FEB 2023 version 34.1



APPENDIX 1**WXHR PRESENTERS INVOLVED IN BROADCASTING PROFESSIONALLY**

NAME	CAREER	Approx YEAR AT WXHR
Chris Rowsell	TV Cameraman	1969
Alan Thompson	ILR Presenter/prog controller	1970
Alan Ross	ILR Presenter	?
Ralph Bernard	GWR Ch Exec	1972
Mike Brooke	BBC local radio	1971
Dave Howell	BBC tv Sound	1972
Steve Tongue	ILR/BBC sport	1973
Chris Martin	Freelance sport	1974
Mike Porter	Freelance Sport	1974
Pete Dowsett	Thames TV/ Ch 5 engineer	1976 - 2013
Paul Noble	BBC engineer	1972
Phil Hughes	BBC engineer/producer	1971
Clare Dawkins (Phillips)	BBC local radio	1974
Chris Searle	BBC radio/tv presenter	1974
Kevin Ward	Presenter Capital Radio	1974
Chris Read	BBC engineer	1974
Geoff Hemming	ILR presenter	1975
Geoff Bolden	BBC engineer	1975
Mike Baldock	BBC micrographics	1976
Ian Beach	Capital Radio/ Freelance	2001
Sumit Bose	BBC Newsroom South East	1980
Jon Emmins	BBC studio manager / Ops Radio 2	2003
Annabel Port	Virgin/Absolute Radio	2000 - 2002
Nina Goswami	Journalist BBC Local	? - 2006
Kerry Magorian	Receptionist / Assistant Absolute	2010 - 2016
Irina Aggrey	BBC Tv presenter then admin role	2010 - 2015
Rosie Merotra	Freelance and PA on Gardners' Q.T.	2016 -

APPENDIX 2

WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL RADIO AWARDS

1995

Regional Station of the Year for London
UK Station of the Year
Best Personality - Mike Jones

1996

Regional Station of the Year for London - Runner Up
Best Personality - Ian Betteridge

1997

Regional Station of the Year for London
Best Special Event - Carol Service from the Chapel

1998

Best Non-Music Programme - Runner Up
Best Special Event - Runner Up

1999

Regional Station of the Year for London - Runner Up

2010

Male Presenter of the Year – Mal Wayne nominated

2011

Carol Concert at Chelmsford Cathedral – Silver for Best Event

2013

National Station of the Year
Best Speech Package - Gold

2015

Best Speech Package – nominated
Best Promotion - Gold