

THE HEALTH OF A CITY

by Jed Scott

Exactly 21 years to the day after the foundation stone was laid by Lord Hughes of Hawkhill, on the morning of the 9th of September 1986 I was born by Caesarean section in the maternity unit of Ninewells Hospital. My birth was observed by a crowd of first year medical students who - I'm told - applauded as I was lifted up into the world. It was a straightforward and well practised procedure but the delivery of Ninewells itself, although celebrated in the end, was rather more challenging and not without complications...

The beginning

The story of Ninewells starts in July 1948 when the National Health Service (Scotland) Act came into force. Soon after this a nationwide survey of hospital provision was launched by the Department of Health for Scotland. On 3 November 1948 the minutes of the newly formed Eastern Regional Health Board (ERHB) recorded the first tentative steps towards a new hospital for Dundee, to replace Maryfield as well as Dundee Royal Infirmary, whose conversion to a modern hospital was considered almost impossible.

The ERHB Architect was directed, along with Dundee Corporation's City Engineer and City Architect, to prepare a report on suitable sites of between 100 and 200 acres in size that may be available on the periphery of the burgh. On 2 March 1949 this report was presented to the Board and a visit to "various sites in the vicinity of the city" for interested members and their wives was arranged for the following Sunday.

The Board minutes are then regrettably silent on the matter until August 1949, when the Hospital and Specialist Services Committee reported that a letter had been received from the Department of Health "intimating that the Board's formal proposals on this matter should now be submitted for the approval of the Secretary of State." It was accordingly agreed to recommend:

- 1) That the Regional Board should resolve to redevelop the Central hospitals in the Dundee area on a new site with provision for a new Medical School and residential hospital;
- 2) That the site of the new development should be that marked on the plan already considered by the Board and that;
- 3) these plans be submitted to the SoS for approval in principle."

Dundee Royal Infirmary



