

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL.

Research No. 646 (Second Series).

For whom made. Mr A. G. W. Keys, National Secretary RSL, on behalf of
Sir Murray Porter, Agent-General for Victoria, London.

Subject. History of Harefield Park Harefield (No 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital)
1914-1919

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HAREFIELD PARK HOSPITAL

(No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital)

In November 1914, Mr and Mrs Charles Billyard-Leake, (Australians resident in the U.K.) offered the property known as "Harefield Park", Harefield, Middlesex, to be used as a Home for convalescent wounded soldiers of the A.I.F. Their offer was accepted by the Commonwealth Defence Department in December 1914.

The property comprised Harefield Park House, a plain three-storey brick structure, some outbuildings, and ample grounds. At the time of the acceptance of the offer it was estimated by the military authorities that the house would accommodate 50 soldiers under winter conditions and 150 during spring and summer. In fact, the hospital accommodated over 1,000 beds at the height of its use, and also a large nursing and ancillary support staff.

On the 19 January 1915, the Minister for Defence informed the Secretary, Department of External Affairs that approval had been given for the following staff:- One Captain (A.A.M.C.), one Sergeant, one Corporal, four men as wardsmen and orderlies, also one Matron and five nursing sisters; the Medical Superintendent to be under the supervision of the High Commissioner.

Upon arrival in England, the Medical Superintendent was to purchase the necessary equipment for 150 patients in the summer, and 60 in the winter, and with his staff furnish and equip the house in readiness for use by Australian troops in the spring. The official date of opening was 4 June 1915.

The first Commanding Officer appointed for the Hospital - Captain M. V. Southey, A.A.M.C. and his staff left Australia by the transport "Runic", due to arrive in England on, or about April 15, 1915, and the Matron Miss E. Gray, and five nurses, left by R.M.S. "Osterley", to arrive in England on, or about 27 March 1915. The names of the original nursing sisters were:- Senior Sister Pratt, and Sisters Mills, Chadwick, Kidd and Hayes, all of whom had been chosen specially for their fitness for the positions.

The work of the Depot was laid down in the following terms:

- 1) Rest home to recuperate after sickness or injury, for officers, warrant officers, N.C.O.'s and rank and file.
- 2) Depot for collecting invalids for return to Australia.

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The work of the Depot became far wider as the war progressed, and in time all normal hospital functions were assumed, and by August 1918, it had been made a centre for eye, ear, nose and throat diseases. It also maintained an Electrical Department where many hundreds of "Skiagrams" (early X-rays) were made. There were also massage and Dental Departments. By April 1918, the nominal roll of nursing staff had risen to 74. In May 1919, Mr Billyard-Leake offered "The Red House", Harefield for rental for accommodation for hospital personnel. By this time, the Hospital was contained in large huts, dispersed throughout the grounds of Harefield Park, there being nearly fifty buildings in use, including workshops, garages, stores, messes, canteens, recreation hall, billiards room, cook house, detention room and mortuary.

Amenities included the Red Cross Store which was opened in November 1916; the Patients Canteen - opened and conducted by a Committee comprising Mrs Charles Billyard-Leake, Miss Letitia Billyard-Leake, the Hon Mrs Lambart, Mrs Stedall and Miss Stedall, Mrs Evans, and Mrs Vennings - all ladies of the surrounding district. There was also a Billiard Room, Writing Rooms, and a Recreation Hall where daily concerts were given by visiting parties, as well as regular film shows. Mrs Gregg-MacGregor (wife of Chaplain Captain Gregg-MacGregor) managed the Library. Trips to London were arranged and paid for out of Canteen funds, and Mrs Vennings and other ladies made their cars freely available for country trips, picnics, and journeys to and from the railway station, (both for patients and visitors to the Hospital).

An Orderlies Canteen was formed in January 1916 for the use of all ranks below sergeant. Suitable premises were found and converted into Canteen, Billiard Room, and Reading and Writing Rooms.

A small magazine was produced in November 1916, to be followed in December 1916 by the first issue of the official magazine, the Harefield Park Boomerang, issued under the editorship of the Director of Recreation and Study. It was subsequently published irregularly, until it was finally established as a monthly journal, and ran until the final issue - the Victory Number, December 1918.

Many awards and decorations were made at No.1. AAH, and one of note was that made to Staff Nurse Corkhill A.A.N.S. The entry in the War Diary August 1918, Appendix III, (Sept 10, 1918) reads: "Extract from A.I.F. List No. 375, 27.8.18 re S/Nurse E. P. Corkhill (now attached to No.1 A.A.H.)."

War Office
23rd August 1918

His Majesty the King has been pleased to approve of the award of the MILITARY MEDAL to the undermentioned lady for distinguished service in the Field, as recorded:

Staff Nurse Pearl Elizabeth Corkhill, A.A.N.S.
For courage and devotion on the occasion of an enemy air raid. She continued to attend to the wounded without any regard to her own safety, though enemy aircraft were overhead. Her example was of the greatest value in allaying the alarm of the patients."

The Hospital and its staff came under great strain during the outbreak of epidemic influenza with its pneumonic complications in 1918, and its highest monthly number of deaths was experienced in October/November 1918 due entirely to the epidemic.

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Military funerals were conducted for those who died at the Hospital, burials taking place at Harefield Parish Churchyard. Through the instrumentality of Mr F. A. Newdegate M.P., (later Sir Francis A. Newdigate-Newdegate, K.C.M.G., Governor of Tasmania) a portion of the Harefield Parish Churchyard originally given by him to the Church, was reserved for the burial of Australian soldiers who might die at Harefield Park Hospital. Mr Newdegate also undertook to bear the expenses of burials, except the cost of coffins, which were supplied by the A.I.F.

Commander (later Captain) Alfred W. Tarleton, R.N., of Breakspears, in reply to a letter from the Commanding Officer asking to be allowed to secure turf from his land for the graves, replied (24.5.17):

"....I should like very much to take this matter on myself and if the Australian Authorities would permit this small help would undertake that Breakspears will grass the graves and keep them in order. This would be a very little thank offering in recognition of the help given by the gallant action of Australian soldiers in preserving wuch peaceful homes from the violence of the enemy. I know my children would faithfully keep the trust, and that, in this old country, means from generation to generation...."

A Headstone Fund was started at the Hospital, and the stones were designed in uniform pattern in scroll form on a flat pedestal.

On Anzac Day, April 1918, the third anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, a Commanding Officers Parade of Staff and walking patients was held, and was attended by some 337 personnel. After inspection by the Commanding Officer, the whole marched through Harefield Village to the Parish Churchyard, headed by the Unit Band. Near the graves of the Australian soldiers, the troops were drawn up in formation of a hollow square under the Australian flag. The two Chaplains attached to the Hospital conducted the Memorial Service. Many prominent residents, of Harefield attended the service, together with friends of the hospital, and the nursing staff. The decoration of the graves with flowers was arranged by the wife of the Commanding Officer (Lieut Col Yeatman) and many ladies helped and contributed to the cost of flowers, or gave them from out of their own gardens.

The Hospital continued to function until January 1919, when it was gradually closed down. The Commanding Officer Lieut Colonel Yeatman was awarded the O.B.E. (Military Division) for his services.

The Commanding Officers for the Hospital were:

Captain M. V. Southey	AAMC 4.6.15
Captain R. E. Shuter	-7.15
Major E. Buller-Allan	-8.15
Lt Col W. T. Hayward	22.11.15
Lt Col C. Yeatman	1.10.17

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In January 1916 the authorised Establishment of Harefield Auxiliary Hospital was given as:

- 1 Lieut Col - Officer Commanding
- 5 Majors
- 12 Captains
- 2 Hon Lieut Dentists
- 1 Hon Lieut Quartermaster
- 1 Matron
- 56 Female Nurses (all ranks)
- 6 Masseurs (male or female)
- 1 Sergeant Major
- 15 Sergeants and Staff Sergeants
- 10 Corporals
- 94 Privates

By March 31st 1916, the total number of equipped beds had risen to 803 and by November of that year was recommended to become a 1,000 bed hospital, more as a General Hospital, with operating departments, X-ray departments etc., rather than as a convalescent home. The approved establishment for a 1,000 bed hospital was amended (the original not having appeared in AIF orders), and was shown thus:-

- 1 Lieut Colonel
- 5 Majors
- 12 Captains
- 1 Quartermaster and Hon Lieut.
- 1 Matron
- 2 Head Sisters
- 36 Staff Nurses
- 1 Warrant Officer
- 15 Staff Sergeants and Sergeants
- 10 Corporals
- 94 Privates

Attached

- 2 Dental Units
- 6 Masseurs or Masseuses

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This was further amended by the addition of an X-ray attendant - Sergeant and a Laboratory Attendant - Sergeant.

By 6 December 1917, there were three Lieut Colonels attached to the Hospital. They were a) Commanding Officer; b) Surgeon Specialist, and c) the Radiologist to the A.I.F.

Apart from the medical and nursing staff attached to the Hospital, there were a large number of Voluntary workers, and they assisted in many ways. Their names were forwarded on a nominal roll to General Birdwood.

They were:

Mrs Charles Billyard-Leake, Jacks Mill, Harefield, Chairwoman of Ladies Committee organizing and controlling Patient's Canteen.

Mrs Evelyn Venning, Horne Hill Court, Chalfort St Peter. Assisted in Patient's Canteen, and gave the use of her motor car.

Miss Drumm, Fareham Common, Assisted in Patient's Canteen.

Mrs Gregg-Macgregor, Harefield, Assisted in Patient's Canteen, and acted as Librarian.

Mrs Major, Woodcock Hill, Rickmansworth. assisted in Patient's Canteen.

Miss Letitia Leake, Jacks Mill, Harefield. Assisted in Ward Duties.

Mrs Coxen, Park Lane Harefield. Organized Sewing Guild and acted as voluntary accompanist at Ward concerts.

Mrs K. Evans, Woodcock Hill, Rickmansworth. Acted as instructor in wool and fancy work.

Miss hailand, The Vicarage, Harefield. Assisted in Patient's Canteen, and in splint making.

Miss Stedall, The Grove, Harefield. Assisted in Patient's Canteen and in splint making.

Mrs C. G. Shaw (c/o Lt Col C. G. Shaw, Harefield)

Mrs C. E. Dennis (c/o Lt Col C. Dennis, Harefield)

Mrs E. Brown (c/o Lt Col E. Brown, Harefield)

engaged in splint making.

Mrs C. Yeatman (c/o Lt Col Yeatman, Harefield) assisted in Red Cross Store daily and assisted in splint making.

Mrs V. Addison, No.1 A.A.H. Harefield, cited as Australian Red Cross Society Representative.

Mrs Meers, Park Lane, Harefield. Assisted in Red Cross Store.

Miss V. Taleton, Breakspears, Harefield.

Miss A. Taleton, Breakspears, Harefield.

Assisted in Patient's Canteen.

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Mr R. Robson-Scott, No.1 A.A.H. Harefield, Acted as motor driver.

Mrs A. Young. No.1 A.A.H. Harefield

Mrs C. Newton No.1 A.A.H. Harefield

engaged as voluntary masseuses until July 1918 (from which date they were paid for this service)

Mr & Mrs H. Markes, Northwood,

entertained parties of patients weekly at Sandy Lodge Golf Club.

Mrs Stedall - The Grove, Harefield.

Entertained parties of patients weekly at her residence.

Mr H. Coxen, No.1 A.A.H. Harefield

Acted as Director of Recreation and Amusement, and Manager of the Patient's Canteen.

Mrs Geddes-Scott-Harefield.

Assisted in Patient's Canteen, and organized Ward concerts and acted as accompanist.

Mrs Fremantle, High Street, Harefield.

Assisted in Patient's Canteen, and Wool and Fancy work classes.

The Hospital had many important visitors during its life time, and the War Diary notes a letter from Lieut Col Morris (Chief Medical Officer, High Commission's Office) 16.8.15. "...we now have 500 patients at Harefield... You will be interested to hear that the King and Queen visited the Hospital today." A complete listing of all the visitors to the Hospital between 1916 and 1919, when it closed, would read like a list of entries for Debrett or Who's Who, and included many prominent Australians.

A brief list includes:

H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught

The Dowager Marchioness of Linlithgow

The Dowager Countess of Malmesbury

The Bishop of Kensington

The Hon. W. M. Hughes (Premier of the Commonwealth) and Mrs Hughes

The Rt Hon Andrew Fisher (High Commissioner)

The Rt Hon Alfred Deakin and Mrs Deakin

Sir Charles Wade, Agent-General for New South Wales

The Hon C. G. Wade, Agent-General for Western Australia

Sir Francis Newdegate (Governor-elect of Tasmania) and Lady Newdegate

Sir John McCall, Agent-General for Tasmania

The Premier of Queensland and Mrs Ryan.

General White (Chief of Staff, A.I.F., France)

Lieut-General Birdwood

The Chaplain-General, The Rev A. T. Holden

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The Surgeon-General, Sir Neville Howse, V.C.

The Matron-in-Chief

The Red Cross Commissioner, Colonel Murdoch

The records of No.1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital were returned to Australia at the end of the war, and are lodged with the Australian War Memorial Library. It is from these records that these notes have been taken.

The records include the official War Diary of No.1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital; hospital files for 1915, 1916-1919; complete bound volumes (2) of the Harefield Park Boomerang, and a collection of photographs given to the Australian War Memorial by Dr John Yeatman (son of the Commanding Officer of No.1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Lieut Colonel C. Yeatman).



12 June 1974