A TERRITORIAL FIELD AMBULANCE "AT HOME."

BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. KINNEAR, T.D.,
Royal Army Medical Corps, T.A.

The following brief account of a successful "At Home" held recently by the 152nd (Highland) Field Ambulance, T.A., is written in the hope that it will be useful to others who intend to run similar shows and encourage those who have not thought of holding an "At Home" to do so.

Besides being a part of this unit's contribution to the local Coronation celebrations, the "At Home" was intended to give an opportunity to the public of seeing what a Field Ambulance is and what it does (ignorance of answers to these two questions is not found outside the Service only).

The preparation for the "At Home" was also excellent practice for the personnel of the Field Ambulance, and many of the exhibits have been carefully preserved for use in future training. Fortunately the recruiting question did not form a factor in our object as we are nearly 10 per cent. over our establishment.

"At Homes" held in the depots of "Regular" units were taken as a guide and modified to suit local conditions. This unit shares with two others a block of buildings, including a smaller and larger hall with a parade ground in front. They are situated near the centre of the town. The use of the whole of the premises for the day was obtained and the local press gave us the courtesy of their columns for publicity and notices were also inserted in the advertisement pages a week before and a day before the event.

This unit boasts of an excellent pipe band which was an invaluable help to the proceedings. 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon was the time fixed for opening the doors, but the crowd commenced to roll up a quarter of an hour before that and interfered with last minute touches! The first hour was given to an exhibition in the smaller hall. The exhibits were arranged round the hall, prominently lettered, A, B, C, D, and so on, and 500 four-page descriptive programmes had been "duplicated" and were distributed at the door.

The exhibition began with a large chart (modified from R.A.M.C. Training) showing the scheme of evacuation in the field, each stage being represented pictorially. Then came a complete set of model mechanical transport of a Field Ambulance, followed by models of an R.A.P., A.D.S., and M.D.S. The dug-outs lit by electric light proved attractive, especially to the younger members of the audience.

The next part of the exhibition dealt with the treatment given in a Field Ambulance, emphasizing its simplicity and its necessity before
evacuation. Methods of dealing with fractures, haemorrhage and shock in the field were all shown, including X-ray films in a home-made but effective viewing box, demonstration on all who cared to try it of how a tourniquet can obliterate the pulse, and the warming of a collapsed patient as described in para 231 of R.A.M.C. Training. The Dressing Section followed and showed the apparatus for giving morphia and anti-tetanus serum as well as a display of operation instruments, which attracted as large a crowd as any exhibit. Ward equipment was represented by bed, pyjamas, etc., and the methods of recording casualties and dealing with their equipment were also shown. The next section dealt with Chemical Defence and, in addition to charts and models of a complete decontamination centre, showed past and present types of respirators, including the civilian type, and gave anyone who cared an opportunity of trying on a respirator. Finally a "museum" brought one back to the door of the hall. Photographs of the unit and its commanding officers since 1908 and large scale war maps of France with a list of actions in which the unit took part during the Great War with ribbons leading from the name to its site on the map were very popular with former members of the unit. Among other exhibits a number of lantern slides were on view, lit from behind, showing the evacuation of casualties from the front line to the home hospital and other views of the unit in past years.

After leaving the hall the visitor could see the "hospital kitchen" where tea and bully beef sandwiches were available, and inspect the transport we actually have. Our new Motor Ambulance Car was much admired.

Towards 4 o'clock the pipes and drums drew the crowd towards the larger hall where a display was staged accompanied by a running commentary from a loud speaker. Stretcher carrying was shown, first the right way and then the wrong, which ended in the wounded man being tipped over a "wall", stretcher and all. Recruits then gave a very good demonstration of hand seat carriage. An "air raid" was staged with a gas sentry who was injured by a gas bomb and had to be dealt with by a man in full protective clothing and removed by a squad wearing respirators. Thomas's splint drill followed and the display ended with a very successful sketch written by one of the officers.

The organization and preparation for the "At Home" took considerable thought and work. Each officer was allotted a certain part for whose arrangement he was responsible, and each section of the exhibition was in charge of an N.C.O. who could explain and answer questions. A very worrying point was how many visitors to expect; we estimated five hundred or so but were prepared to deal with more and even to duplicate the display if necessary. Actually about one thousand turned up which rather taxed the accommodation of the hall but did not overwhelm us. About ninety officers' guests accepted invitations. They were asked to bring their invitation cards with them in order that they might be "received" in the Officers' Mess. It would have been better to have
asked them to show the cards at the door, as many kept them in their pockets and were shepherded straight into the hall with ὀι πολλοὶ. While the display was going on the smaller hall was cleared and refreshments provided for the officers’ guests at the close.

Expenses (including over £3 for advertising) came to between £9 and £10, not an excessive figure. The public seemed very appreciative and the unit had a good “polish up” in its duties, including the problems of dealing with an unknown number of “casualties” to put through a Field Ambulance!

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Colonel P. S. Lelean, C.B., C.M.G., F.R.C.S., F.R.S.E., Professor of Public Health, University of Edinburgh, who lent some anti-gas equipment, and Miss Nairn, Ashbank, Dundee, who lent some excellent models of decontamination centres which she had made herself.

I have to thank Colonel G. F. Dawson, M.C., D.D.M.S., Scottish Command and Colonel W. A. Robertson, M.C., A.D.M.S., 51st (Highland) Division, for permission to send this article for publication.
A Territorial Field Ambulance "At Home"

J. Kinnear

_J R Army Med Corps_ 1937 69: 255-257
doi: 10.1136/jramc-69-04-05

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://jramc.bmj.com/content/69/4/255.citation

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/