FREEDOM WITHIN MEDICAL LIMITS

The Star and Garter Home for Disabled Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen.

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PROBABLY many who read this story will be familiar with the Rugger Ground at Twickenham. Possibly some may have cast an eye northwards and noticed an outstanding building on the hills behind dominating the whole countryside and no doubt many will know what it is. In fact it was the work of Sir Edwin Cooper, R.A., a well-known architect of the 1914-18 period. His labour of love was to produce a memorial which would aid the living. His work was well done as is evident by the Star and Garter Home as it stands today.

But today, 1966 is the Golden Jubilee Year of the home and those 50 years tell a wonderful story. In 1915 when war casualties were mounting at an alarming rate and causing much public anxiety the British Red Cross Society took the matter in hand. They appreciated that many sailors and soldiers permanently disabled had no place of refuge on being discharged from hospitals as being of no further use to the Services. They decided that a home should be established where these unfortunate men could be properly cared for and given first-class nursing and medical treatment.

As it so happened, the old Star and Garter Hotel, which in various forms had stood at the top of Richmond Hill since 1750, had closed its doors and was for sale. With the assistance of the Chartered Auctioneers and Estate Agents Institute, a successful public appeal produced the necessary funds to purchase the freehold of this wonderful site. The deeds were presented to Her Majesty Queen Mary, who in turn entrusted to the B.R.C.S. the duty of carrying out the task of setting up the home. A special committee was set up and this can be considered as the forerunner to the present Board of Governors. Little time was wasted because on January 14th, 1916, 65 patients were admitted and accommodated in the Old Ball Room annexe, being the only part of the old hotel which was habitable. At this stage it could be considered a home and hospital. Her Majesty Queen Mary became the first Patron and commanded that the home should carry on the name of the hotel. Many folk connect this title with the oldest and most noble Order of the Garter and the Star its precious emblem which would seem appropriate considering the close connection with those servants of the Crown, Her Majesty's sailors, soldiers and airmen.

It was soon quite apparent that this old building with all its limitations would at the first opportunity have to be replaced by another. A further world-wide appeal for funds to carry out this great work was made by the British Women's Hospital Committee and was soon answered most generously by the Women of the Empire (now Commonwealth). As a result the new and present building became known as the Women's Memorial of World War One. The success of the appeal enabled the erection of the new building to start soon after hostilities ceased. Further funds to complete the task and to set up an endowment fund followed soon after. The existing patients were moved to a seaside annexe which had been acquired at Sandgate, Kent.

The Architect—Sir Edwin Cooper, R.A.—designed this vast neo-Georgian type building to stand on the steep slopes overlooking the River Thames, with nine floors and with spacious corridors and balconies to facilitate movement of the wheelchair. The bulk of accommodation is in the form of comfortably furnished single rooms grouped by floors each under the supervision of a sister. Two large wards and several smaller ones accommodate those requiring constant supervision and attention and are located on one floor—with a few smaller ones elsewhere. Lower floors—still overlooking the river and garden terrace—contain a large dining room and a spacious common room fully equipped for all kinds of entertainment.

The home is equipped as an almost complete medical unit with a small theatre for minor surgical cases, a dental unit and a dispensary. There is a first class physiotherapy department well supplied with all essential items enabling treatment to be carried out in wards or in single rooms. There are also fully equipped remedial exercise rooms. Facilities for archery and table tennis and billiards are all available. All this forms a vital part of the life of the home, as about 60% of the patients require this as daily treatment. Occupational therapy is strongly encouraged to ensure that a congenial occupation promotes the physical and mental well being of the patients now debarred from normal activities of life. Workshops provided by funds from the Nuffield trust are staffed by first rate instructors. Here patients can make rugs, baskets and soft toys, and those more mechanically minded can work in the well-equipped clock and watch repair shop, which is sponsored by The Forces Help Society and Lord Roberts Workshop.

As Commandant and Chief Medical Officer, I am supported by a first-class team—a Matron, Assistant Matron and Chief Wardmaster head the nursing and medical side. The Chief Engineer is resident and has a full time task to look after such a large and complicated building. The Steward, who is an ex R.A.M.C. officer, carries out all the tasks, which, as most readers of this article will know as those of a quartermaster, are a very vital link in our chain, whilst the Accountant has to deal with figures relating to an income and expenditure account of about a quarter of a million pounds annually. The home is fortunate in having many eminent physicians and surgeons on the consulting and visiting staff, some of whom have for very many years placed their time and skill at our disposal. The Board of Governors consist of a number of former senior officers of the three services and of distinguished ladies and gentlemen from other walks of life.

The home is well appointed to provide a happy social life. Wards are equipped with radio headphones. Television exists almost in every corner—many have private sets. A first-class library, a wide-screen full scale cinema, a fine little memorial chapel, philately and photographic clubs. Numerous concerts and outings are arranged by many kind individuals and those associations who cater for the needs of the disabled.

The aim of the founders of the home was to provide a home in which all patients could be given as much freedom as is practicable within medical limits. All can come and go more or less as they wish and leave to go away on holiday is granted by me so long as I am assured that my patient will be properly cared for when away from the home.

I normally have 200 patients within my care—these men are not sick in the full sense of the word. They are disabled as a result of injury and so forth—in the first place this was as a result of war service. Today any man who has served in one of the three services in peace or war and has become disabled is eligible to apply to be put on the waiting list. Unfortunately this is still too long. Each case is considered by certain of the governors connected with the medical side and myself. The home has had about 1700

patients under its care since it opened. As would be expected, the number includes a predominance of soldiers—there are usually about 150 former soldiers, 30 sailors and 20 airmen. Over the years almost every regiment and corps has been represented here and at the moment there are six who served in the R.A.M.C., one by now being in his 88th year. Incidentally three of the nursing orderlies who care for them also served in the R.A.M.C. The age bracket covers from three Boer War veterans, aged over ninety, to a youngster of twenty-five.

To give some idea of the type of patients now in the Home, the following details show the disabilities from which they suffer:-

Amputations		36
Arthritis		9
Disseminated sclerosis		38
Paraplegia:-		
Gunshot wounds		6
Disease		14
Injury		8
	—	28
Hemiplegia:-		
Gunshot wounds		2
Disease		20
	—	22
Other diseases of the central nervous system		33
Other diseases of the circulatory system		8
Diseases of the respiratory system		7
Other diseases		5
	—	
TOTAL		186
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The total figure is lower than 200, as over the past three years we have had to have a number of beds vacant in order to allow the replacement of all the pipework of the hot and cold water and central heating systems—this having become necessary on account of some 45 years hard wear and tear and being at a cost of about £100,000.

One ward, all paraplegics, is directly under the supervision of Sir Ludwig Guttman, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.P., D.Ch.(Durh.), the Director of the Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville, who visits the home at frequent intervals.

The Home is not part of the National Health Service but is an independent charity, dependent very largely on donations, etc. from a generous public and the services. The Governors take full advantage of any chance of grants from official sources but these are small. There is a gap of some £40,000 per annum between known expenditure and reliable means. We are not part of the British Legion, as many people think, although we work very closely with them.

It may be felt that this is not a fitting place for a charity appeal but I hope that in this special year of thanksgiving the "Men in Harbour" at the Star and Garter will not be forgotten by their comrades.

AN EARLY MILITARY MEDICAL SERVICE

Now for the first time, at least in English history, we find a Commander-in-Chief making regular provision for the medical and surgical treatment of his sick and wounded. Henry V, before he set sail for the Battle of Agincourt on 11th August, 1415, enlisted in his command a medical service. Early in the year (the indentures bear date 29th April 1415) the King had agreements drawn up with his physician Nicholas Colnet and his surgeon Thomas Morstede. Each was to have the daily pay of twelve pence, and to have a guard of three archers, each archer receiving the daily pay of six pence.

Thomas Morstede, esquire, and chirurgion to King Henry IV, V, and VI, one of the sheriffs of London in 1436, gave unto the church of St. Mildred built upon Walbrooke a parcel of ground, containing in length from the course of Walbrooke toward the west 45 feet, and in breadth from the church toward the north 35 feet, being within the gate called Scalding wike, in the said parish, to make a churchyard wherein to bury their dead', wrote Stow in his Survey of London. The site of Scalding wike today is in St. Mildred's Court, between the National & Provincial Bank on the east, and the Midland Bank on the west.

We do not hear of Nicholas Colnet being furnished with any assistance. Anything like hospital treatment of disease was probably impossible in a campaign of those days; and a staff of physicians could hardly have had any proper facilities for using whatever knowledge they may have possessed. On the other hand, Thomas Morstede, the surgeon, was accompanied by a considerable establishment. When a wound had been received life could often be saved, or efficiency preserved, by immediate surgical treatment. The surgeon-general, as we may call him, was accordingly directed to take with him twelve of his own craft. Each of the twelve was to receive the daily pay of an archer; and in addition to the daily twelve pence, a quarterly allowance of a hundred marks was assigned to each of the two chief medical officers.

Nearly a month later Morstede presented a petition to the King praying for a sum of money for the purchase of such things as were necessary for his office, and also that all persons engaged in the surgical service of the army should be directed to act under his instructions, and should receive such wages as he should appoint. A third request was for a transport service, modestly limited to a chariot and two wagons. Morstede wished also to know what wages he was to receive, and how many attendants were to be allowed him. The King's reply granted the chariot and wagons for the ambulance service and twelve assistants: but it is not clear that these twelve were the same surgeons whom Morstede had been originally directed to take with him.

Six pence a day could not have been a very attractive remuneration. Accordingly we are not surprised to find Morstede afterwards applying to the King for power to press, "as well within as without franchise birth, persons of his craft such as he should choose to accompany him". In the following year, that it may not be necessary to return to the subject, the King issued a writ to Morstede and William Breowardine, his colleague, to this effect:

"Know ye that we have appointed to you, conjointly and severally, surgeons and other workmen, to take and provide without delay for the making of certain instruments necessary and fitting for your mystery, such as may be required for our present campaign beyond the sea".

The army, raised and equipped with such care and forethought numbered, it is said,

6,000 men-at-arms and 24,000 archers. Cannons as effective as the manufacturing skill of that day could produce, and other engines of war had been procured. So effective and so well prepared an army had never before been collected in England for service abroad. A splendid relic of the expedition remains to this day in the Record Office. On 20th July a roll was prepared in which should be written the names of all who were to set forth with the King. It is still to be seen, a splendid example of the caligraphy of a time when that art was approaching its perfection.

REFERENCES

- HURCH, A. J. (1891). '*Henry the Fifth*'. Macmillan & Co., London and New York.
 STOW, JOHN. (1603). '*A Survey of London*'. John Windet Printer to the Honorable Citie of London.

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PROGRAMME OF EVENTS, 1966

Particulars of events usually associated with "Corps Week" have been circulated to Commands and sent to all retired officers who are associate members of the Headquarter Mess.

Monday, 20th June. Summer meetings R.A.M.C. Golfing Society and R.A.M.C. Ladies Golfing Society.

Thursday, 23rd June. R.A.M.C. Officers Annual Dinner (Note change of day).

Friday, 24th June. A.G.M., R.A.M.C. Funds Officers' Branch, R.A.M. College, 2 p.m.

R.A.M.C. Officers' 'At Home'—Headquarter Mess, 4 p.m.

Saturday, 25th June. R.A.M.C. and R.A.D.C. Sports—Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale, 2-15 p.m.

Religious Services

Thursday, 23rd June. Roman Catholic Church Service (Holy Mass)—Westminster Cathedral (St. Georges Chapel), 11-30 a.m.

Sunday, 26th June. Corps Sunday—Drumhead Service 11 a.m. followed by March Past of serving soldiers, old comrades and members of R.A.M.C. Association.

Thursday, 15th September. R.A.M.C. and R.A.D.C. Swimming (*final day*), 6 p.m. followed by subscription supper R.A.D.C. Mess.