

THE HOME FRONT IN SURREY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR A GUIDE TO SOURCES AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

Part 8. Tending the Wounded

Within days of the outbreak of war, the Lord Lieutenant reported that he had received numerous offers of large houses to use as temporary war hospitals and convalescent homes for the sick and wounded service men. Existing hospitals, or wards within them, were also offered to the War Office and some schools were converted such as the new County School for Girls in Guildford, which was equipped by the Guildford Division of the Red Cross Society as an annexe to the Royal Surrey County Hospital. The minutes of the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey's Fund, which supported the county's war hospitals, include lists of hospitals and convalescent homes in Surrey, with the numbers of beds in each (**SHC ref 608/9/1**).

The County Council's two mental asylums, Brookwood Hospital, Woking, and Netherne Hospital, Coulsdon, took in additional patients from the Middlesex County Asylum, the West Sussex County Asylum, Chichester, and Oxfordshire County Asylum, Littlemore, as those hospitals were cleared of patients so they could be used as war hospitals. A Brookwood Hospital file relating to this process, 1915-16, is held as **SHC 3043/Box96/18**, and further references will be found in the minutes and reports of the County Lunatic Asylums Visiting Committee.

*Epsom and Ewell War Hospital admission register, 1918
(SHC ref 6292/22/13 p1-2)*

Of the London County Council asylums around Epsom, Horton was emptied to become Horton (County of London) War Hospital, taking its first patients in May 1915 and later becoming a specialist centre for eye, ear, nose and throat injuries and then, in Jun 1918, a centre for the treatment of badly wounded officers with severe injuries. In the end it treated 44,613 cases and also made 442 shell bodies as sideline. The Manor Hospital was offered to the War Office in Jul 1916. Used initially for light surgical cases and then dysentery cases, in May 1918, it became a hospital for 700 officers (orthopaedic and convalescent), though 160 beds were reserved for Canadians. In Mar 1918, Ewell Epileptic Colony was offered to the Army Council as a hospital for neurasthenic ex-servicemen which it remained until 1927. The annual reports for the year ending Mar 1915 and for the years 1915-1919 (published 1921) of London County Council Asylums and Mental Deficiency Committee contain reports on the war work carried out by the Epsom hospitals (**SHC ref 6857/File10-11**). Postcards of Horton County of London War Hospital are held as **SHC ref PC/29/69** and **PC/58/84**. For an Epsom Cemetery burial register including soldiers who died at Horton Hospital and who in 1920 were exhumed and reburied see **SHC ref 6717/1/3**.

Also in Epsom, the Epsom and Ewell War Hospital (Grandstand) was set up in the newly built annexe to the Epsom Racecourse Grandstand. Established at the initiative of local doctors and

funded and equipped through the efforts of local people, it was in operation between Oct 1914 and Feb 1916. An agreement of the Epsom Grandstand Association with the hospital's committee, for use of the annexe, is held as **SHC ref 3434/20/4**. For an admission register of the 672 service patients who were treated at the hospital, detailing their regiment, regimental number, age, injury or illness, admission and discharge dates, and identifying Belgian, French, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand soldiers, see **SHC ref 6292/22/13**.

Much the best represented hospital in the collections of the History Centre is Clandon Park War Hospital, established in the stately home of the Earl and Countess of Onslow, at under the direction of Lady Onslow as commandant. Clandon served as a primary military hospital, receiving men directly from the front, and treated 5059 patients in its 100, later 132 beds. Heywood, Cobham, and Broom Hall, West Horsley, were linked to it, providing 80 more beds. Copious correspondence relating to the running of the hospital survives in **SHC refs 5337/10/52/1-327, G173/95/1-33, G173/206/1-5** and



Clandon Park War Hospital (SHC ref PC41/16)

8792/1-7. A copy of an album of signature of soldiers treated at Clandon is held as **SHC Z/489/1**. Extracts from the memoirs of Margaret E Van Straubensee, a nurse at the hospital from 1916, are held as **SHC ref Zg/60** and the Earl of Onslow's own account of the hospital is in **SHC G173/1/6** and also appears in his published autobiography, *Sixty-Three Years* (Hutchinson, 1939). Postcards of the hospital are held as **SHC ref PC/41/16-18**.

The St John's Ambulance Brigade played a leading role in conveying the wounded to hospital and the minute book of the Guildford Division includes references to the Brigade's work in support of local war hospitals, including Clandon (**SHC ref 1978/1/3**).

Other war hospitals represented in our collections include Thorncombe Military Hospital, Bramley for which we have annual reports (**SHC ref 1688/1/1-5**); Schiff Home of Recovery, Cobham, which was the first hospital outside London to receive wounded soldiers (**SHC ref 2765**); Oaklands Red Cross Hospital, Cranleigh, for which we have a scrapbook kept by Hester Godfrey, the Quartermaster, containing signatures of staff and patients, photographs, concert programmes, newscuttings, annual reports and other papers (**SHC ref 6520/1-69**); Guildford War Hospital (situated in the Union workhouse) for which we have a magazine, 1917 (**SHC ref 6857/File 7**) and postcards and photographs (**SHC refs 6316/1918, 1919, 1982, 2086; PC/72/ALB6/63-64; PH/72/BOX4/163 & 165**); Ottermead Military Hospital, Ottershaw, for which we have a photograph album compiled by Phyllis Geen while a nurse there (**SHC ref 6823/1**); Reigate Union Hospital including schedule of its condition in 1917 and of dilapidations after requisition (**SHC ref BG9/31/47**); the Old Vicarage, Walton on the Hill, for which we have a copy of a booklet of sketches and verses written by wounded soldiers treated there, 1918-1919 (**SHC ref 7575/4/6**); Waverley Abbey Hospital for which we have verses written by Edith Mary Ware who worked as a VAD in the hospital (**SHC ref 1576/83/14**); and Warlingham War Hospital for which we hold the chaplain's register of services, confirmations (152 names),

baptisms (8 names) and deaths (3 names), 1917-1919, and which gives the age, unit and number of the men (**SHC ref 2128/3/15**).

Many ex-service patients suffering from psychological trauma because of their war experiences were admitted to local authority run mental hospitals. In Aug 1916, the Board of Control, on the suggestion of the War Pensions Statutory Committee, introduced a scheme whereby such men were classified as 'service patients' to avoid the stigma of being regarded as paupers. They were to be considered as private patients, and enjoy the privileges appropriate to such patients (see **SHC 6857/file 11**), and their maintenance became the responsibility of the Ministry of Pensions. The registers of Surrey's mental hospitals, reflect this scheme and provide stark testimony to the number of men, during and after the war, whose experiences were deemed to be a determining factor in their mental collapse. Hospitals maintained parallel series of civil and medical registers, the former indicating which body was responsible for maintenance of the patient and recording those that should be classified as 'service', the latter providing more information about the age, occupation (and unit for service patients) and medical condition of the patient. Registers for the county asylum, Brookwood Hospital, Woking, are held as **SHC refs 3043/5/1/2/7-9** and **3043/5/1/8/1-2**. For Brookwood, a further series of registers, the Medical Superintendent's private record of patients admitted has additional brief medical details (**SHC ref 3043/5/8/2/7-8**). Civil and medical registers for the London County Council asylum of Long Grove, Epsom, are held as **SHC refs 6251/4/8-10** and **6251/4/25-27**. The Long Grove records also includes an alphabetical register of service patients, 1916-1937 (**SHC ref 6251/4/60**). The register, which gives details of the patient's unit, also lists ex-service cases, that is those who had been reclassified as it had been decided that their mental illness was not due to wartime trauma. A file relating to this postwar reclassification process, 1922-25, is held as **SHC ref 6251/4/61**.

The case notes provide the most detailed insight into the symptoms and progress towards recovery of service patients. Brookwood case books are held as **SHC ref 3043/5/9/135-38**; Netherne Hospital case files are held as **SHC ref 6230/Box 117, 89 and 114** and the case notes of patients who had died or been discharged or transferred as **6230/vol 5-7**. The Netherne case notes, for former soldiers and sailors, include a synopsis of the medical superintendent's report to the Ministry of Pensions as to why the patient qualified as 'service' with a brief chronology of his military service. The case books for Holloway Asylum, Egham, a private, charitable foundation that catered for mentally ill members of the middle class, and took in a number of officers are held as **SHC ref 3473/3/24-25**.

Some of those who had suffered particularly severe injuries, were provided for by The Royal Star and Garter Home on Richmond Hill which was established following the purchase in August 1915 of the empty Star and Garter Hotel by the Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute as a hospital for badly-disabled ex-servicemen requiring long term residential care. A purpose-built hospital on the site was opened in 1924, designed by Sir Edwin Cooper, but in January 1916, the first patients were admitted to the hotel annexe which was



Patients at The Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond (SHC ref 8711/RSP/35/2)

adapted as a temporary home. All the first admissions were 'soldiers and sailors who had been paralysed by being shot through the spine or brain, the larger proportion being totally paralysed below the waist' and who had been discharged from hospital because it was thought nothing more could be done to improve their condition. Although 20 deaths (out of 112 admissions) occurred in the first year, the Home reported that five men were sufficiently recovered to walk out the front door. Records of the home are held as **SHC ref 8711**. A poster requesting subscriptions from school children to the Jack Cornwell Fund (Cornwell having died at Jutland, aged 16, for which he received a posthumous VC) to endow a ward for disabled sailors at the Star and Garter Home is held as **SHC ref 4417/5/1**.

Other hospitals and convalescent homes represented in our collections of photographs and postcards include:

Bletchingley Castle Soldiers Convalescent Home, 1914 (**SHC ref PC/18/26**)

Ingram Road Military Hospital Thornton Heath, Croydon (**SHC ref PC/48/50**)

Woodcote Park Convalescent Hospital, Epsom (**SHC ref PC/58/96-100**)

Highlands Military Hospital, Farnham (**SHC ref 6316/5897**)

Frensham Hill Military Hospital (**SHC ref 6316/1462, 1464, 1476-1477, 1486, 1497, 1500, 5968; PC/66/23-25**)

Branksome Hilders War Hospital, Haslemere (**SHC refs 6316/2126, 2179, 6227**)

Church Hill Military Hospital, Haslemere (**SHC ref 6316/13904**)

High Rough Military Hospital, Hindhead (**SHC refs 6316/6766-6767; PC/145/ALB2/63**)

Anstie Grange War Hospital, Holmwood (**SHC ref 6316/2627, 13205, 13206**)

Newlands Corner Hospital, Merrow (**SHC ref PC/100/46**)

Military Hospital, St John's, Woking (**SHC ref 8511/160/105 and PH/160/109**)



Scrapbook of Hester Godfrey, Quartermaster of Oaklands Red Cross Hospital, Cranleigh (SHC ref 6520/1 p3)