

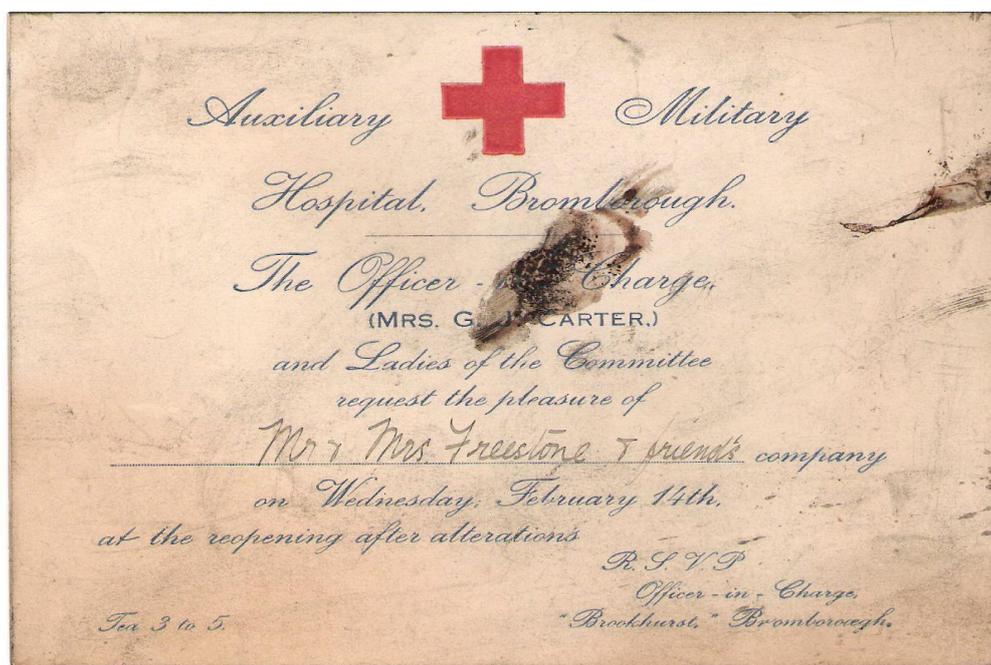
Red Cross Auxiliary Home Hospital, Bromborough

When war broke out in August, 1914, the Birkenhead Red Cross were involved in supplying sick and wounded soldiers with clothing, bandages and supplies. Mrs G.J. Carter, wife of the Managing Director of Cammell Lairds, of 'Brookhurst', Bromborough, became the township leader for Eastham and Bromborough and held sewing classes four times a week at her home. Obviously keen to do as much as possible for the wounded soldiers returning from the front, a suggestion was made to establish a local hospital. The council of Bromborough Golf Club, which had closed in 1914 due to the war, agreed to hand the Club House over to the War Office and as a result the Red Cross Auxiliary Home Hospital, Bromborough, opened on 22nd May, 1915. It was designated as being one to 'receive patients directly from the front'. The hospital had an operating theatre, two professional nurses, a masseuse and services provided by Doctors Garson, Guthrie and Knott. It was estimated that it would cost £500 above the Government grant allowed, to run the institution for one year, £352 of this had been raised by the end of March, 1915.



The first patients were brought in motor-cars, lent by local Gentlemen, from Woodside Station, Birkenhead. A few days after the opening of the hospital, the men were visited by Katherine, Duchess of Westminster. She said it was 'a beautiful hospital, and finely equipped'. One ward was named for General Sir Henry MacKinnon and the other was called 'Golf' ward as a compliment to the members of Bromborough Golf Club. Many of the local families who had men serving overseas, were involved with the hospital, such as the Wilson's from the 'Hermitage', Captain George Wilson was serving with the 4th Bn. Cheshire Regiment, and the Montgomery's from the 'Allports', Captain William Sproat Montgomery served with the 1st/6th Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

By the summer of 1916, it was decided that facilities at the hospital needed improving and fund raising began for the money required to carry out this work. In September, 1916, an 'American Tea' was held in the grounds of the hospital to raise the £400 required for the new facilities. According to the 'Birkenhead News', stalls included glass and china, 'smokes' contributed by staff of Messrs Cammell Laird & Co and a flower stall. However, "the most imposing was that furnished by the whole of the V.A.D. Where anything could be procured from a plump chicken to hot-house grapes or dainty sweetmeats". Music was provided by the Liverpool City Police Band and a total of about £130 was raised.



Invitation to the reopening of the hospital

The extensions were officially opened on 14th February, 1917, with invitations sent to the local families in the area, including the Freestone's of 'Limehurst', whose son Horace, had been tragically killed at Trones Wood in July, 1916. Other residents of the village were invited the following day to see the facilities now on offer. There was a new kitchen, pantry, bathrooms, a recreation hall, several huts with beds for staff and a private office for the officer-in-charge. The wards were now named the Pitcairn Campbell and the Hathaway wards in compliment to General Sir W. Pitcairn Campbell and Surgeon General Hathaway. There was an open air verandah, sufficient for a dozen beds and a large dining room. The accommodation could now hold 62 cases.

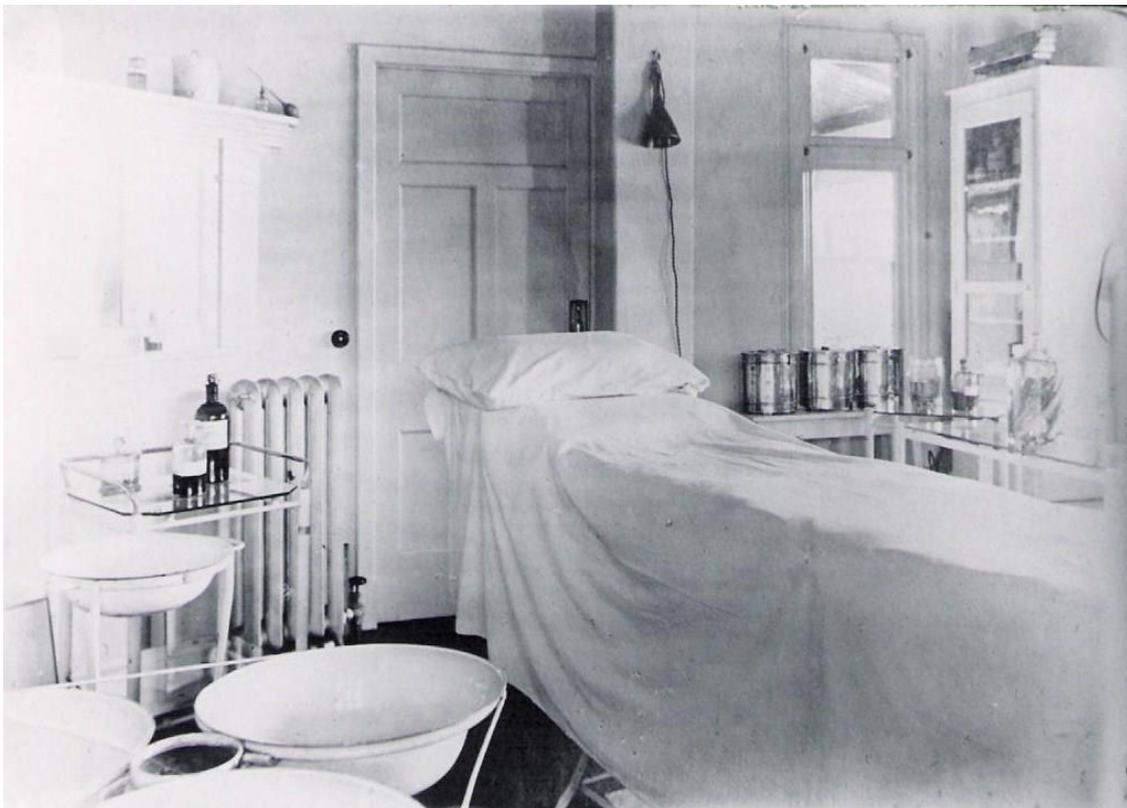


Hospital Ward

Fund-raising continued throughout the period that the hospital was open. In September, 1918, a garden fête was held in the grounds which raised over £100. The fête began with the presentation of Military Medals to some of the patients by Brigadier General Edwards G.O.C. Mersey Defences. 10851 Corporal T.G. Baker 5th Royal Berkshire, was carried forward on a stretcher to receive his award amidst great applause. He had been awarded the Military Medal on 8th August, 1916 when he had been injured three times in the space of three quarters of an hour when acting as a stretcher-bearer. He was awarded the bar to the Military Medal on Empire Day, (24th May), 1918, at Fort Hamel for helping to capture a machine gun and prisoners. One of the most popular stalls at the fête was selling fancy work made by the patients at the hospital.

The number of beds in the hospital increased to 160 in 1918 and 645 patients passed through the hospital during the year as opposed to 275 in 1917. Donations to the hospital included £1,000 from the directors of the Norwegian-America Line "In appreciation of the many services rendered by the managers and staff of Cammell Laird and Co during the progress of the Stavangerfjord contract". £1,118 was received from the workmen of Cammell Lairds and £1,160 from sale of work and several other efforts.

The hospital remained open until July, 1919 when a farewell dance was given to the staff, helpers and friends. When the hospital had first opened it had accommodation for only 18 soldiers, by the time it closed it could take 160. Nearly 1,300 patients had been treated and 118 operations had been carried out with the loss of only three lives. The Bromborough Golf Club reopened later the same year.



Operating Theatre