

Outline History of the Grayshott War Hospital 1914 - 1919

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The Grayshott War Hospital opened its doors in September 18th 1914 and closed them on the 14th January 1919.

Patients & Staff at the Grayshott War Hospital, including Sister Malkin, Sister Leach & Mrs Kay. 1917

The Grayshott Magazine of October 1914 carried the following feature.

Grayshott Private Hospital for Sick and Wounded Soldiers.

'Owing to the generosity of the Rev. Mother Superior of the Convent at Grayshott in placing one wing of the building at the disposal of the Aid Committee it has been possible to offer a completely equipped hospital of 25 beds to the Military Authorities at Aldershot for the use of Sick and Wounded Soldiers. The hospital has been recognised by the War Office as a section Hospital of the Cambridge Hospital at Aldershot.

A maintenance grant of two shillings per day for each patient in the hospital will be made by the War Office, and all other expenses are borne by the Grayshott Aid Committee 'Special Fund'.

Most generous gifts and loans of bedsteads, bedding, tables, lockers, cutlery, spoons and forks, crockery, all daily papers, have been made. The result is a thoroughly equipped hospital, containing everything necessary to promote the rapid recovery of patients.

Where everyone has been exceedingly generous it is invidious to mention names, but an exception must be made in the case of the Rev. Mother Superior and the Sisters of the Convent, who have not only provided the building and a considerable amount of furniture, but offer personal service in cooking, laundry work, household work, and help with nursing.

The hospital is staffed by the local doctors, with Mr. George Cask, Surgeon to St. Bartholomew's hospital, as consulting surgeon; and although in a convent building will be entirely unsectarian.

Mrs. Lyndon (late Sister at Guys Hospital) acts as Lady Superintendent of Nurses and will have under her three fully-trained Surgical Sisters, besides a number of lady probationers, who have patriotically offered their services.

The hospital was opened on Friday, 18th inst., when fourteen patients arrived from the Cambridge Hospital.

The transport arrangements are in the hands of Mr. Budgett, of Araluem, Hindhead, who has had a large number motor cars placed at his disposal for the purpose by residents in the neighbourhood.

The Grayshott Aid Committee are anxious to keep the hospital open as long as the war lasts, but in order to do this they must have the whole hearted support of the parishioners of Grayshott.

The chief expenses will be : 1. Food and medical comforts for the patients. 2. Salaries of the nursing sisters. 3. Wages of porter and laundry maid. 4. Surgical dressings and medicines

The following offers have been received and gratefully accepted by the Committee: a) To pay all expenses of heating and lighting the hospital as long as it remains open. b) The salaries of two trained nursing sisters for six months.

Until the hospital has been working for a month or two it is difficult to make any accurate estimate of the weekly

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expenses, but it is thought that at least £7.10s. per week will be required, in addition to the grant from the War office and the offers of help mention above.

Dr. Arnold Lyndon, treasurer of the Grayshott Aid Committee, will be glad to receive donations, or, where preferred, weekly or monthly subscriptions.

Anyone willing to give butter, eggs, vegetables, fruit, or poultry is requested to send them direct to the hospital.

The Vicar holds a short service each Sunday. For those who are Roman Catholics similar provision is, of course made by their clergy.

The district has presented a motor ambulance to the Royal Army Medical Corps. Mr Coe gave the chassis, while Dr. Lyndon and Mr. Lowry collected over £70 towards the cost of construction.

The Grayshott Magazine of March 1916 carried the following feature.

'The Grayshott Military Hospital is much in need of funds to enable the work to be carried on through the next few months. The balance which was in hand in January 1915 has all been expended, and the capitation fee of 3s. a day for each patient received from the military authorities does not pay much more than half of the working expenses. The Hon. Treasurer, Dr. Lyndon, will gladly receive money donations. Gifts in kind, especially poultry, vegetables, jam, cake and groceries should be sent direct to the hospital.'

In the following May, the Grayshott Magazine reported.

'Grayshott Military Hospital - The special appeal in the March number of the parish Magazine has been most liberally responded to, £76. 5s has been received by the Hon. Treasurer, together with some promises of further help. This has enabled all current liabilities to be discharged and there is a balance in hand, but with the constantly increasing cost of food, drugs and dressings, the hospital will still be dependant on voluntary help to support the War Office grant. Gifts of poultry, vegetables, jam, cake and groceries are always most acceptable. The egg collection, organised by Mrs. Harrison, has proved most successful, and a kind friend of the hospital in Haslemere is also sending a fortnightly supply. The Treasurer is most grateful for all the help received, and takes this opportunity of reminding readers of the magazine that visitors will be warmly welcomed at the hospital every Wednesday between two and four p.m.' **Hospital buildings with Patients & Staff, 1917**

In February 1919, not long after the armistice, the Grayshott Magazine noted.

'The disappearance of the men in blue is another evidence that the fighting has ceased. The Military Hospital was closed on January 14th. This was perhaps the most effective and happiest contribution to the war made by Grayshott. An opportunity will be sought to express a warm appreciation of all who contributed to make it so successful. First of all the Reverend Mother and Sisters in the Convent are to be thanked for supplying the premises, the cooking, and other labour. We are certain that this assistance to the needs of our men will be gratefully remembered. Then the unremitting attention of Dr. Lyndon both as doctor in charge and as careful administrator as well as author of the undertaking receives universal recognition. Mrs. Lyndon, Miss Bewely as Commandant, the nursing staff, the local and occasional helpers, made the hospital a home which the men never failed to appreciate warmly. Of those in Grayshott whose service remained constant we must especially mention Miss Baxendale. She saw it through. Then there were many contributors in money and kind. But above all there are men in all parts of the kingdom who will retain a happy recollection of the happy time in Grayshott after the strain and stress, the blood and the mud of war. Their good spirits and enjoyment were always a sustaining reward.'

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The Grayshott Magazine, May 1919.

The Grayshott Military Hospital report stated that 835 patients had been admitted between September 18th. 1914 and January 14th. 1919, when the Hospital was closed. After expression of thanks to those who had given services or material help, it proceeds - 'The cost per annum has averaged about £2159.; the War Office grants amounting to rather over three fifths of this sum, the remainder having been given by friends without, however, any public appeal being made. The amount given includes gifts in kind. Directly the Hospital closed, the furniture was returned as far as possible; some goods were sold; splints, surgical dressings and appliances were given to the Haslemere Cottage Hospital; a bath chair, books, and a gramophone to the Alton Infirmary, and books and toys to the Alton Isolation Hospital. Surplus underclothing and socks were sent to the Serbian Relief Fund. A large quantity of Hospital fittings and bedding have been retained for the use of the proposed War Memorial Cottage Hospital, should it materialise. It was necessary to redecorate the Hospital before handing it back to its owners, but there may be a few pounds in hand when all the accounts have been met. There is, however, some expenses for maintaining 'Pinewood' the Nurses' hostel, until May 28th., when the annual agreement expires.

It is a great pleasure to record the award of the Red Cross to Miss Molly Baxendale. She worked at the Hospital throughout the whole period'.

Location of the War Hospital and subsequent events and developments

The War Hospital was part of the larger premises known as 'The Cenacle', see picture above. The property was originally built about 1862, named 'Heather Lodge' and owned by Edward l'Anson. By 1888, Mr. Vertue had become the owner and he renamed it 'Grayshott Court'. The present Catholic church was built in the grounds of the house. By 1912, Grayshott Court had been acquired by 'The Order of the Lady of the Cenacle'. It was renamed, 'The Convent', and then renamed yet again, 'The Convent of the Cenacle'. Mrs. Vertue then moved into the smaller 'Court Cottage'. The 'Cenacle' was sold for redevelopment in 1999 and demolished. The site is now entirely occupied by private housing that is located off Headley Road before the Waggoners Wells corner.

Richard Peskett (2007)
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References:

- The Grayshott Magazine, February 1914.
- The Grayshott Magazine, March 1916.
- The Grayshott Magazine, May 1916.
- The Grayshott Magazine, February 1919.
- The Grayshott Magazine, May 1919.