

## 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V)

Formed in 1967 at the time of the reorganisation of the TA from three existing units:

17th General Hospital (HQ Braganza St)

167 (City of London) Fd Amb (Finsbury Barracks)

24 (Eastern) FDS (Dyke Road, Brighton)

Amalgamation of three units presented some problems of adjustment from all. Achieved without much friction due to efforts of Claud Nichol, Patrick Telford and Peter Bodley, the three COs of the above units. Claud Nichol became the first CO of 217.

Training directives were sent annually from UKLF, where the DDMS (a Brigadier) took responsibility for TA training. ADMS (London District) was our immediate supervising officer. Training was organised to prepare the unit for its role in the British sector of the NATO forces in the event of war against the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc in Europe. This was at the height of the "Cold War". The regular medical services would have been quite inadequate in a major war and 80% of medical cover would have been provided by the TA and other resources. Thus our training was taken very seriously and closely monitored by the regular army.

Like all TA units we had a "War Location" in BAOR at GUTERSLAH to which we would go if mobilised for war. Our training was organised around this and our role in it. A 3 year cycle took place in which one year's annual camp was for individual training, one year in unit training in the UK and one year at our War Location. Every year we had a "MOB exercise" in which the unit practised mobilisation procedures and attendance at this was obligatory for all ranks.

Around this structure, training took place to develop military skills and trade qualifications in all ranks plus adventure training to maintain fitness and morale. These features were all tested every year in the "Peter Davis" competition between teams from the unit, a cup being presented to the winners. The competition was started in memory of Maj Peter Davis, a medical officer in the 17th General Hospital who died suddenly at a tragically young age.

All TA General & Field Hospitals completed each year for a trophy awarded for the best standards achieved in training, planning and recruitment. This trophy was won many times by 217 General Hospital.

For more information about the activities of the unit, the following extract from an excellent paper by Maj Graham Barker, written in 1985, is appended. ♦

## Events & Activities

In 1951, the Councils of the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bermondsey, Camberwell and Southwark adopted the Territorial Units based in their respective areas. In 1956, the Bermondsey Council granted the 6th Battalion of the Queen's the Freedom of the Borough. From the 1st April 1965 the Council of the London Borough of Southwark has administered the combined area of the three former Boroughs, and, following the precedents set by those Boroughs, adopted 217 (L) General Hospital RAMC (V) in recognition of the services rendered by the unit to the community.

Through its City Detachment, 217 (L) General Hospital has greatly prized links of long standing with the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London and the Spectacle Makers' Company. Six days before his untimely death, the esteemed Elston Grey Turner (past Master of the Apothecaries and Secretary of the British Medical Association) wrote to me from his hospital bed to let me know that when he proudly commanded 167 (City of London) Field Ambulance in 1955 it was the custom then to provide a step lining party and guard of honour at the Church of St Andrew by the Wardrobe for the Master's Day Service. All wore medals and the Officers carried swords as do the Officers of 217 (L) General Hospital RAMC (V) - many of whom are Yeomen and Liverymen - who proudly continue to provide the Master's Escort at this Service, and enjoy his table afterwards.

Every year since 1972 217 participates in the Lord Mayor's Show and the following Remembrance Sunday joins the wreath laying outside Mansion House with the Lord Mayor, accompanied by the band of the Honourable Artillery Company.

Orienteering has become extremely popular in our hospital as well as in many other military units. In 1983 our male team won the London District Competition whilst our female team from Brighton Detachment won the South East District competition. The Unit also participated in, and occasionally organised the Walkover competitions, the Courage Trophy and also entered teams for Pegasus.

Individual members of 217 have also been provided with opportunities abroad. Many of our doctors provide short term leave-relief for regular army personnel in such places as Hong Kong, Belize, Gibraltar, Cyprus, and occasionally accompany infantry battalion exercises in Africa, North America and Scandinavia. Our nurses also enjoy temporary attachments in West Germany and Berlin. Some of our nurses and physiotherapists working overseas take the opportunity to train with local units eg. Australia and currently with the 801st General Hospital, Illinois, USA. In 1985 three of our nursing officers will be participating in "Operation Raleigh" in South America, with one doctor and one Sergeant.

217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V) is also associated with civilian defence and disaster procedures and recently took part in exercises "Crashpoint" and "Flashpoint" organised by Casualty Joint Emergency Executive Committee (St John's Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross Society) by providing umpires and casualty simulation teams. Our doctors frequently accept invitations to lecture to various groups in London on first aid and our QARANC and RAMC nurses have formed a first aid training cell to instruct and monitor other military units in both basic procedures and more advanced combat medical technician training. ♦

April 1985

G.H. Barker

Major FRCS, MRCOG, RAMC (V)

In 1993, after a comprehensive upgrading of its HQ, in Braganza Street, 217 was honoured by a visit from HM The Queen Mother to re-open the building.

From 1994-5, the unit was commanded by Col R.C. Menzies, the first TA General Hospital to be commanded by a Regular Medical Officer. To him fell the duty of announcing the amalgamation of 217 General Hospital with 257 General Hospital and 221 Field Ambulance to form 256 Field Hospital w.e.f. October 1st 1995. ♦

# The Role of 217 in Wartime

217 forms part of the 3rd line medical support, its MOBLOC is in the rear part of the FCZ.

The Role of the hospitals in this zone is to:

- a) Receive casualties from medical units further forward - we would normally expect these to arrive in ambulance coaches, or possibly by helicopter.
- b) Receive casualties from adjacent areas - probably by Land Rover ambulance.
- c) To sort out casualties into priorities for treatment (TRIAGE).
- d) To provide life saving resuscitation for those casualties who would not otherwise survive evacuation to a more rearward hospital.
- e) To provide life saving surgery to those casualties who would not otherwise survive evacuation to a more rearward hospital.
- f) To evacuate casualties rearwards, other than those fit for duty, as follows:
  - 1. Those fit to move, out of Corps area.
  - 2. Post-operative cases, out of Corps area when fit to move.
- g) Those that are fit to return to unit (RTU) are transferred to the Corps Reinforcement Group.

## Action on Mobilization

On mobilization all hospital personnel must report to their HQ as soon as possible. The Unit will be moved to their MOBLOC by RCT and RAF as soon as transport is available.

The hospital equipment (G1098) and medical stores (I1248) is already in BAOR, in boxes. Each TA hospital has a liaison officer who is a regular RADC dental officer serving in BAOR. In peacetime he looks after the interests of the TA hospital; in war, with the help of the TA unit. Much setting up will nevertheless remain to be done when the unit arrives in location.

## The Role of 217 in Peacetime

The Peacetime role of the unit is training in and for the wartime role, or other national emergency. ♦

## 217 (London) General Hospital Commanding Officers

|         |       |           |      |
|---------|-------|-----------|------|
| Colonel | C S   | Nicol     | 1967 |
| Colonel | T W A | Glenister | 1968 |
| Colonel | G L   | Howe      | 1972 |
| Colonel | A J   | Heber     | 1975 |
| Colonel | E P W | Tatford   | 1978 |
| Colonel | G B   | Smith     | 1982 |
| Colonel | C J   | Young     | 1985 |
| Colonel | B     | Rowe      | 1988 |
| Colonel | A J   | Nicol     | 1992 |
| Colonel | R C   | Menzies   | 1994 |
| Colonel | C J   | Box       | 1995 |

## Honorary Colonels

|            |                 |             |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Colonel    | "Dicky" Marks   | 1967 - 1976 |
| Colonel    | John Sargeant   | 1976 - 1982 |
| Brigadier  | Tony Glennister | 1982 - 1986 |
| Lt General | Sir Alan Reay   | 1986 - 1990 |
| Brigadier  | Hugh Platt      | 1990 - 1995 |

## Matrons

|           |            |               |         |
|-----------|------------|---------------|---------|
| 1967 - 69 | Lt Colonel | G Williams    | TD      |
| 1969 - 74 | Lt Colonel | M Fleet       | TD      |
| 1974 - 75 | Lt Colonel | J Edwards     | TD      |
| 1975 - 78 | Lt Colonel | C M Earp      | ARRC TD |
| 1978 - 82 | Lt Colonel | M P Gray      | RRC TD  |
| 1982 - 85 | Lt Colonel | S B R Scott   | TD      |
| 1985 - 88 | Lt Colonel | E A Hughes    | TD      |
| 1988 - 92 | Lt Colonel | M O M Keating | RRC TD  |
| 1992 - 95 | Lt Colonel | M L Kibbey    | TD      |

# Trouserless in Shorn Cliffe

Lt Col John Heber

Many years ago, on an exercise near the Military Canal at Hythe, a number of us were sleeping during the night in a tent which had been set up as a marquee during the day as a medical reception centre. We had visited a local hostelry and, well sedated, we all slept heavily. No-one was on guard.

In the early morning, we awoke to find that the marquee had been raided and most of our trousers and boots had been captured. There was nothing for it but to return trouserless in our socks to Shorn Cliffe where the 17th General Hospital was at annual camp. Our arrival naturally gave enormous pleasure to our comrades in camp who let fall that the daring raid on our MRS had been led by no less than the Matron herself, Lt Col Hilda Fletcher with some of her nurses and some medical officers.

Official permission was given to proceed to the QA quarters to recover our issue clothing. There the culprits were still in bed and on being aroused, claimed to know nothing. All we could do was to start tipping them out of bed, until, to stop further mayhem, the whereabouts of our boots and trousers was revealed, ie. the male officers ablutions.

This ended one of the seamier incidents of my TA service. ♦

## 217 (General Hospital) PSOs

|                |         |                 |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|
| 1966 - 67      | Major   | Len Wiltshire   |
| 1967 - 69      | Captain | Don Churchill   |
| 1969 - 71      | Captain | Dennis Neil     |
| 1971 - 73      | Captain | Don Mackeey     |
| 1973 - 75      | Captain | Charles Jebbitt |
| 1975 - 77      | Major   | John Ward       |
| 1977 - 79      | Major   | Jim McGill      |
| 1979 - 81      | Major   | Roy Croxton     |
| 1981 - Dec 82  | Major   | Eric Dadds      |
| 1982 - 85      | Major   | Ian Richardson  |
| 1985 - 93      | Major   | Derek Songhurst |
| 1993 - to date | Major   | Derek Rossi     |

## 217 (General Hospital) RSMs

|            |            |     |              |
|------------|------------|-----|--------------|
| April 67   | June 70    | WO1 | J Wright     |
| June 70    | Nov 71     | WO1 | B Cole       |
| Nov 71     | April 72   | WO1 | R Took       |
| April 72   | August 75  | WO1 | B McArdle    |
| August 75  | May 77     | WO1 | F Green      |
| May 77     | October 77 | WO1 | J Mylchreest |
| October 77 | May 78     | WO1 | B Cleaver    |
| May 78     | August 79  | WO1 | P Fisher     |
| August 79  | August 80  | WO1 | J McQuade    |
| August 80  | May 82     | WO1 | W Mallett    |
| May 82     | April 85   | WO1 | S O'Meara    |
| April 85   | April 86   | WO1 | K Lewis      |
| April 86   | May 87     | WO1 | R Clements   |
| May 87     | Oct 93     | WO1 | M Byrne      |
| Sept 94    | to present | WO1 | N Pickering  |

# Camp Sites

|    |                           |
|----|---------------------------|
| 67 | Mytchett                  |
| 68 | Browndown (Floods)        |
| 69 | Bellaby                   |
| 70 | Rinteln BAOR              |
| 71 | Browndown                 |
| 72 | Crookham                  |
| 73 | Dortmund BAOR             |
| 74 | Westdown                  |
| 75 | Browndown / IOW           |
| 76 | Olen (Belgium)            |
| 77 | Barry Budden              |
| 78 | Penhale                   |
| 79 | Olen                      |
| 80 | Longmoor                  |
| 81 | Westdown/St Martins Plain |
| 82 | Hamm (Germany)            |
| 83 | Edinburgh                 |
| 84 | Knook/Browndown           |
| 85 | Olen                      |
| 86 | Edinburgh                 |
| 87 | Saighton, Chester         |
| 88 | Menden, Germany           |
| 89 | Edinburgh                 |
| 90 | Saighton                  |
| 91 | Penhale                   |
| 92 | Edinburgh                 |
| 93 | Saighton                  |
| 94 | Wathgill, Yorkshire       |
| 95 | Gibraltar                 |

## 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V) Out of Camp Activities

Every year military competitions took place. Pegasus was a bit physical for our soldiers and we usually did as well as 257 General Hospital but were beaten by 144 (Para) Fd Amb. Walkover was initially a London District Competition started by Colonel Ken Walker, 217 organised it in the New Forest several times and when not organizing it, often won it. In the early days it consisted of canoeing, marching, bivouacking, first aid and shooting. Later this was hijacked to become a national event based at Saighton Camp near Chester and in North Wales. Neither of the London Hospitals did very well after this transition. We entered the Courage Trophy or ran a stand from time to time. This open competition was for military skills for volunteers from London District and civilian teams. We had some of the skills but musketry was not our strong point and we usually lost out on the ranges.

What then did 217 *really* excel in? Orienteering and walking. These were activities in which both men and women could compete. Initially, Van, (people did not always use his rank or full name; J.S. Van den Berg RADC) led a small team of unlikely heroes over long distances at great speed. There was something about his personal leadership which inspired every member of his team and his loud guffaws overcame every obstacle but he was really a field ambulance man and found military women incongruous. Debbie Malins, our pharmacist, an ex-regular was not only very fit but very clever and beat all comers to become the women's orienteering champion for Southern England. Meanwhile on another front, Derek Duchemin, our paymaster, was walking every year in the Njeimegen marches in Holland. These efforts were individual but were associated with many team efforts both in the military competitions mentioned above and also in lesser efforts on occasions such as the Chichester marches organized by the RMP.

Socially there was an active calendar of dinners and parties. The officers were lucky to have John Currie, a Korean war veteran, as a neurosurgeon at St Bartholomew's Hospital who managed to arrange a very grand cocktail party there every year. One year Graham Barker was PMC and he managed to produce the most vivid and powerful concoctions seen in any military establishment. These were nearly lethal to the partakers and almost bankrupted the mess. A very pleasant innovation introduced in the time of Cyril Young, was to invite the Old and Bold to a Mess Night at Longmoor on the Friday before weekend training, happily this will continue annually after the amalgamation.

For a number of years, Burn's Night was celebrated in the Drill Hall and the haggis was piped in with due ceremony. This was revived by Colonel Menzies in the last year of 217. Perhaps it was for this reason that I found 13 sets of bagpipes on pallets in our G1098 war stores in a hanger in Dolmen Germany.

There were two special unit competitions each year, the Peter Davis Cup was really for fieldcraft because Peter Davis was an expert at making himself comfortable in adverse circumstances in the field. He unfortunately failed to survive one of the first renal transplants in 1959. Generations of training officers manipulated this event to brush up the unit's weaknesses. There were three basic principals: everyone must take part (except the QM!), the teams must be small and it must involve a lot of fresh air. Although originally a weekend event, this eventually came to form part of the camp programme. The more recent event was nominally an interdetachment first aid competition called the Barry Bowl, but the way things do, it developed into a casualty clearing exercise under fire or NBC attack.

A children's Christmas Party was held for many years, partly for the children of the unit and latterly for the severely handicapped from a local hostel. For weeks beforehand funds were collected, presents were bought, decorations were made, and tapes were borrowed. On the day, Father Christmas, often assisted by a few cartoon characters or fairies would greet the children and after a few games or a dance, the Mayor of Southwark would arrive in his Daimler for a brief photo-opportunity. Most of the sergeants mess and soldiers parties took place at the weekends and at camp. These varied from informal discos to the Sergeants Mess in full mess dress with the RSM presiding.

The detachments had very special parties of their own. The City Detachment led by Peter Bodley and John Currie were renowned for the excellence of their hospitality and spawned an Old Comrades Association which after many a row with the hierarchy of Braganza Street eventually became respectable as the City Volunteer Officers' Club. There was a loveable group of untrainable experts in this detachment epitomized by that brilliant philosopher and truck driver Harry Davies. Brighton had a long tradition to maintain and was very special to Pat Tatford, Betty Woods, Coral Weber, Colin Barrie and Debbie Malins. It had some particular stalwarts in the Sergeants mess. Blackheath flowered for a few years under Mary Heber but closed soon after she left it to be replaced by Bromley and Catford. The detachments were very special places where rank mattered little and personality mattered a lot.

Individuals made their mark in many fields, Esther climbed the peaks of the Himalayas with an army team. Jane raced in army yachts. Julian's ski club went off to find the snow every spring and several people went to unusual corners of the world with the expeditions of Op Raleigh. Officers went off to Nepal, Hongkong, Cyprus, Germany and the Falklands as leave reliefs for their medical colleagues while others were watchkeepers on military exercises.

What about drill and ceremonial? Every year, two officers in service dress with Sam Browne's gleaming and with swords and frogs, escorted the Master of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries to the Annual Service at St Andrews by the Wardrobe and afterwards were entertained by the Society in their magnificent hall at Blackfriars. Every now and again a steplining party would attend Southwark Cathedral for the mayoral service. Perhaps the major event of this nature was the visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Army Medical Corps attended by Field Marshall the Lord Bramall, her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for London. The guard of honour was inspected, the Corps Band played, the refurbished TA Centre was declared open and HM circulated and spoke to nearly everybody there. Perhaps the unit needed a motto and what better than the words of Her Majesty, "How Keen!" She said. ♦

Barry Smith 1995

# Pen Portrait of Peter Davis

Lt Col A J Heber

A very bright young doctor with a promising career ahead of him. I think he was SR in medicine ? rheumatology at the Hammersmith. Tragically he died suddenly from renal failure about 1965. The Peter Davis Cup competition was started in his memory.

He enjoyed and was very good at all field work. Always well equipped to keep comfortable in the field. When I shared a tent with him, he had always got tea and hot water for shaving ready in the morning before I woke, using a small spirit heater he carried about.

An accomplished motor mechanic, I remember that at one annual camp he used all his spare time taking the head off his car engine, regrounding the valves and re-assembling it. No practical task was beyond him.

In appearance, he was a large, bespectacled man, rather untidy and often grubby from some DIY job. He was never very smart on parade. A delightful, easy-going, totally unflappable character, he was much liked by us all and greatly missed. ♦

## Major Derek Samuel MBE

Derek Samuel, who before his retirement was the longest serving member of 217 deserves a special section in this scrap book. His service began before the 2nd World War and ended in 1982. The following is a summary of his service, as related to me by himself.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1938      | Enlisted in 140 Fd Ambulance, aged 18.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1939 Dec  | Posted to 11 Fd Amb in France.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1940 June | During the German invasion of France, he was evacuated individually from St Nazaire on a Fishing boat, arriving at Port Talbot in Wales.<br><br>After returning to the RAMC depot he was posted to 1st Anti-Aircraft Division as Medical Corporal where he moved around various gun sites. |
| 1942      | Posted to 5 General Hospital which went to N. Africa with 1st Army.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1943      | Served with 58th General Hospital in Italy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1945      | Volunteered for Far East and posted to 31st Indian General Hospital, but war ended, he returned to the UK and after a short posting to the Medical Centre of a POW camp, he was de-mobilised in 1946.                                                                                      |
| 1947      | Joined 17th General Hospital in the rank of sergeant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1960      | Commissioned and took over as QM.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1982      | Retired.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

### Honours & Awards

|      |                                                                   |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1972 | MBE for services to the Army.<br>TEM & two bars.<br>TD & one bar. |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|

## "Van"

One of the most colourful characters in 217 and one who everyone will remember is Major Van den Berg.

Always the life and soul of the party, whether on exercises or at social events, his slightly battered-looking face and steady banter kept everybody amused and happy. The high morale of the unit, I am certain, was due to him to a large extent.

He ran the "adventure" side of training for years, organising and taking part in such events as the Pegasus trophy and Walkover Cup. Many of the "short afternoons" he organised seemed to involve himself and others getting soaking wet. He was appreciated by all ranks because of his total lack of pomposity.

"Van" continued to wear his No 1 dress or "Blues" at Regimental Dinners long after they had been discarded by everyone else, in fact until his last dinner before retiring. At this dinner he appeared on entering, apparently resplendent in his old "Blues", but it was soon seen by all present, that his uniform was just a facade. The entire back of his jacket and trousers had been cut off and the front half was just kept in place merely by a few bits of cord. A typical Van den Berg escapade and a fitting end to a great career.

Col A J Heber



## 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V)

### Officers Mess

#### Dining out of Col RC Menzies OBE L/RAMC

| Lt Col<br>Heber | Lt Col<br>Ducker | Brig<br>Platt | Col<br>Menzies  | Lt Col<br>Kibbey | Lt Col<br>Olver |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Maj Samuels     |                  |               |                 |                  | Maj Mears       |
| Maj Cook        | Maj Rossi        |               | Maj Rutledge    |                  | Maj Allen       |
| Maj E-Allen     | Maj R-Bell       |               | Maj Dixon       |                  | Maj Davis       |
| Maj Reeve       | Maj Somers       |               | Maj Barr        |                  | Maj Bradbury    |
| Maj Miller      | Maj Malins       |               | Maj Lewis       |                  | Maj R Wood      |
| Maj Phillips    | Maj A Wood       |               | Maj Cowling     |                  | Maj C-Harris    |
| Capt Coles      | Maj Day          |               | Capt Dickinson  |                  | Maj S-Young     |
| Capt Kovar      | Capt Bartholomew |               | Capt McLaughlin |                  | Capt Soar       |
| Capt Rastall    | Capt Richter     |               | Capt Edwards    |                  | Capt Archer     |
| Capt Capstick   | Capt Collins     |               | Capt Chandler   |                  | Capt Chance     |
| Capt Olney      | Capt Seasman     |               | Capt Soszko     |                  | Capt Byrne      |
| Capt Wright     | Capt Smith       |               | Capt Darby      |                  | Capt Cook       |
|                 | Lt Hicks         |               | Capt Falla      |                  | Capt Stewart    |
|                 |                  |               |                 | Lt Cooke         |                 |

## Magazine Item

### RAMC Military Historical Society

#### Merger of Antiques

An historic merger took place in October 1995 by the joining of the lineal descendants of the two remaining original units of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps.

The 1995 merger brought together 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V) which traces its lineal descent, *via 3rd London (City of London) Field ambulance TA*, to the lay companies at Birbeck College of the original Volunteer Hospital Corps formed in 1885; and 221 (Surrey) Field Ambulance RAMC (V) which has lineal descent *via 47 (Home Counties) Field Ambulance RAMC TA* from the Woolwich Companies of the VHC also formed in 1885.

The VHC, later the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps and the RAMC (Volunteers), became field ambulances of the Territorial Force in 1908 thus, with the addition in 1995 of 257 (Southern) General Hospital RAMC (V), the lineal descent now devolves upon **256 (City of London) Field Hospital RAMC (V)**.

After 110 years therefore, the 1885 units formed by Surgeon-Major Evatt, Dr James Cantlie and Lieut McLure of the London Scottish Rifles are now merged, and long may they continue.

WHOGWAS

**217(London)**

**General Hospital  
RAMC V  
1967-1995**

*A Scrapbook*

**COMPILED BY**

**COL JOHN HEBER**

**(COMMANDING OFFICER 1975 - 1978)**

# 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V)

Established in April 1967 from the amalgamation of  
three existing units, namely

17th (London) General Hospital

167 (City of London) Field Ambulance

24 (Eastern) Field Dressing Station

The following pages give accounts  
of these three units...

# Synopsis of History

## 17th (London) General Hospital T A

Prior to 1914 the unit was known as the 1st County of London General Hospital, Military General Hospitals did not exist as such in peace, but there was a permanent cadre of 2 officers and a Quartermaster. This cadre consisted of:-

|                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Commanding officer | Lt. Col W A Atkinson TD MD |
| Senior Officer     | Major R J W Oswald.        |
| Quartermaster      | Major (QM) Purcell.        |

The unit mobilised in 1914 as a 520 bed unit and eventually expanded to 1600 beds. It was located in :-

St. Gabriel's College for Ladies.  
L C C Schools.

Beds in St Bartholomew's, The National and London Temperance Hospitals.  
Huts in Myatts Park.

On 6th September 1914, Lt Col Sir A Bowlby was one of the officers and he became the first Consulting Surgeon to the British Expeditionary Force.

This unit, together with the 2nd London General Hospital, provided officers to form No 53 General Hospital which went to France in 1917.

The unit was disbanded in 1918.

The Unit was reformed in 1921/33 as No. 2 County of London General Hospital (TA) and re-named at a later date as the 13th (4th London) General Hospital, (TA). It was one of the three T A General Hospitals which then existed up to 1938.

In February 1939, a cadre was thrown off by the 13th (4th London) to form the 1st (1st County of London) General Hospital (TA). This unit mobilised on 2nd September, 1939 and moved to Goodwood under the command of Colonel W. McK. H. McCullagh, DSO, TD, FRCS, who then handed over the command to Colonel J.H. Carver, TD, MB, FRCS, who remained in command until July, 1945.

In October, 1939, the unit was re-named as the 17th (London) General Hospital, (TA) and served in Europe and India as shown below:-

|                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Jan - May 1940        | France           |
| June 1940 - Jan 1942  | U.K.             |
| April 1942 - Jan 1944 | Dehra Dun, India |
| Feb - June 1944       | In Transit       |
| July 1944 - Jan 1946  | Dacca, Bengal    |

From July 1945 until January 1946 there was a rapid succession of 5 Commanding Officers and in the latter month the unit was placed in suspended animation.

In May 1947, when the Territorial Army was re-constituted, the 17th (London) General Hospital was re-formed at the Duke of York's H.Q. Chelsea and in February 1961 was moved to its present location in Braganza Street.

### Commanding Officers from 1947:-

|              |                                                         |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| May 1947     | Colonel G.B. Mitchell-Heggs, OBE, TD, MD, FRCP.         |
| June 1951    | Colonel W.E. Tucker, CVO, MBE, MB, FRCS.                |
| April 1955   | Colonel N.C. Oswald, TD, MD, FRCP, (later Hon Colonel). |
| April 1958   | Colonel M W Lloyd-Owen, TD, MB, FFARCS.                 |
| October 1961 | Colonel J W S H Lindahl, TD, MB, M.CGIR. FRCS.          |
| October      | 1964 Colonel C S Nicol, TD, MB, FRCP.                   |

Throughout the history of the unit the outstanding feature of its existence has been the close relationship between it and the various London hospitals from which its medical officers have been drawn. This relationship is closer today than it has ever been, and since the reconstruction in 1947, has acquired a wider scope so that, today, the area of intake has spread over most of the Home Counties.

The 17th (London) General Hospital (TA) had a fixed and not unimportant role in the National Defence Scheme as a 1200 bedded hospital, capable of rapid movement and effective service at any place to which it might be sent. Its personnel consisted not only of RAMC but also included RADC, QARANC, ACC, RASC and RE. There was also an attached cadet unit. ♦

# Additional Information - Second World War General Hospitals

## No 17 General Hospital - WO177/1194-1197 PRO

The war diary opened 1st September 1939 at East Wing, Duke of Yorks Barracks, Chelsea, London.

Commanding Officer - Lt Col. James Carver  
(Unit title, 1st (1st County of London) GH)

2nd September 39 Loc. Goodwood House, Chichester Sussex.

December 39 C/O now Col Mitchell-Heggs. Unit title changed to 17th  
(London) G.H.

8 Jan 1940                      Cherbourg  
10 Jan 40 - Apr 40           Camiers

22 May 40 01.00hrs ADMS orders unit to proceed to Boulogne, leaving 6 Off's  
and 30 O/R's under Oi/c Carver.

16.00hrs                      Dover  
23.00hrs                      Tidworth

25 May 40                      Pennygillam Camp, Launceston, Cornwall  
27 May 40                      Bovey Tracey, Devon  
6 June 40                      Leeds  
Aug 40                      Clifford House, Moortown, Leeds  
28 Sep 40                      Watford  
Nov 40                      Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts  
Jan 41                      do. The formation of 57 General Hospital began  
28 Dec 41                      Mobilization order received  
13 Feb 42                      C/O Carver. Liverpool  
16 Feb 42                      Sailed  
1 Mar 42                      Freetown  
22 Mar                      Durban  
13 April 42                      Bombay  
16 April 42                      Dehra Dun INDIA  
June 42                      Report. "50 tons of G1098 untraceable including  
X-Ray Screening Set, Generator Plant and 750  
Bedside Lockers.  
Aug 42                      Unit title altered to 17 British GH  
1943                      Unit maintained location all 1943  
Jan 44                      Left for new location DACCA  
June 44                      No diary for this month  
1945                      Unit maintained location all 1944 and 1945  
Jan 1946                      Unit at RAMC Depot, DEOLALI. Final diary  
entry reads: "This Hospital went into suspended  
animation wef 10th February 1946." ♦

Some very old notes

contributed by

Lt Col Alan Reese...

# 17 London Gen Hospital

Contributed by Lt Col Ken Reese

First parade 2 May 1947 attend by OC only Colonel GB Mitchell-Heggs.

On May 15 Maj WWG Townsend and Lieut RM Wren attended

On 9 Oct Major M.W. Lloyd Owen and Lt Col WE Tucker first paraded and Lt Col NC Oswald on 24 Oct. They seem to have joined the unit on 28 Aug.

Major G.W. Pimblett joined on 4 Mar 1948

Major HC ~~Hitchin~~ Hutchin on 3 June 1948, Major LE Nor Lynch on 30 Sept and Major L N Palmer on 7 Oct 1948.

Captain GL Howe joined 10 Aug 1950. Major Lynch left unit in April 1950

Three National Service officers reported on dates shown

Capt Reese 3 July 50, Capt Hatfield 20 July 50 and Capt Sheerboom 31 July 50

Capt Russell only appeared once and Capt Sheerboom ~~4~~ twice

Capt Hatfield, of course became a ~~territorial~~ Territorial Officer.

Attendances for ORs begin on 6 Nov 1947. The following ~~were the~~ joined unit in 1947 with dates of first attendance

WO II. Langford CW. 13 Nov (Discharged from TA 24 Feb 1948)

WO II Waring N 27 Nov

S/Sgt Paveley FW 13 Nov

S/Sgt Schiff JM 4 Dec

Sgt Waghorne SW Oct

Sgt Harding A Oct

Sgt Brownfield ~~who did not attend~~ who attended 3 drills only.

Sgt Wick R Oct

Cpl Horland T 13 Nov

Cpl Samuel DR Oct

Cpl Semple G 13 Nov

Cpl Osborn AS 6 Nov

Cpl Parker HG 27 Nov

in 1948 the following enlisted:

Pte Reid F 15 Jan

Cpl Honour 6 Nov 1947

Sgt Sahel J 6 Nov 1947

Pte Williams EC 4 Dec 1947

Cpl Colkham WT 13 Nov 1947

202 QM S Mc Murdie 11 Dec 1947

Cpt Lipton E 18 Dec 1947

Cpt Mason EA 15 Jan

Cpl Glover HF 11 March

Sgt Horcraft JC 15 Apr 48

Pte Hillis FG W 22 Apr 48 cleared to parade 9-12-48

Pte Milner DH 6 May 48 Posted 3-Mar 49

Pte Parrott GR 3 June 48

Pte Broughman AG 5 June 48 discharged after 28 Sept 48

Pte Chatterman 2 Sept 48

Pte Richardson RP 16 Sept 48

~~Sgt Pitts~~ Pitts BG 15 July 48

# 17th (London) General Hospital T A

## Notes for RAMC Officers

(Circa 1950)

**GENERAL** The character and reputation of a unit depend very largely upon the example set by the officers of that unit. A single officer falling short of the highest possible standard gravely weakens that unit. These brief notes are intended to help all officers to know what is expected of them.

### SALUTING

A Salute is a mark of respect to the commission held by the person to whom the salute is addressed. Failure by a non-commissioned rank, when in uniform, to salute any person whom he knows to be a commissioned officer (whether the officer is in uniform or not) is regarded as a serious military crime. Such failure must always be instantly checked and a salute exacted. It is equally important that salutes should be acknowledged by a smart salute in return. A salute can only be given (or acknowledged) with the hand if the right hand is free and a head-dress is worn. If bareheaded or if both hands are occupied, the salute is performed by standing or marching to attention, turning the head and eyes smartly in the direction of the other person for six paces if on the move or for a slow count of six if stationary. When a group of officers are saluted, the salute will only be returned by the senior officer in the group, the other officers standing to attention while he returns the salute.

Between brother officers the conventions over saluting differ considerably from those over saluting between O.R.s and officers. On parade officers are required to salute any other officer senior to them as dictated by the requirements of the parade. Off parade, however, it is customary to salute the Commanding Officer on meeting him outside the Mess for the first time each day only. An officer is expected to salute on entering the office of any officer who is his senior, whether that officer is actually present in his office or not. Officers of the rank of Lieut-Colonel or above belonging to other units will normally always be saluted by officers below that rank.

## DRESS

It is axiomatic that a unit may be judged by the standard of dress and turn-out of its officers. While other ranks have to submit to inspection to ensure correct turn-out, it is the personal responsibility of every officer to see that his own turn-out is correct in every particular. It should be unnecessary to point out that the word 'uniform' implies uniformity, but it has been remarkable in the past how often four or five officers might be seen going on parade with no two of them dressed identical.

The detailed features of each form of dress are as follows:-

### 1) Shirt - Sleeve Order Service Dress, Khaki Cap.

Khaki shirt with open neck and epaulettes bearing badges of rank. The sleeves to be neatly rolled, the rolled part forming a neat cuff two inches wide with the lower margin two inches above the bend of the elbow. Battle dress trousers supported either by belt or by 'stable belt' or regimental pattern. The type of belt to be worn will be detailed in Unit Part 1 Orders. Boots and anklets WE will always be worn. Black boots as issued, with metal-studded soles, are correct wear for officers but brown boots are permissible.

### 2) Battle Dress Service Dress, Khaki Cap.

Khaki Shirt with Khaki tie. Battle dress blouse with whistle cord of RAMC pattern on right shoulder. A whistle should be carried on the whistle cord and a bottle opener, although not obligatory, is desirable. Battle dress trousers. Boots with anklets WE will normally be worn. Belt WE.

### 3) Service Dress Service Dress, Khaki Cap or No 1 Dress Cap.

Khaki shirt with khaki tie. Service dress tunic with RAMC whistle cord on the right shoulder. Sam Browne belt on duty, khaki cloth belt off duty. Service dress trousers, khaki or grey socks, black or brown shoes.

#### 4) No 1 Dress

No 1 dress cap. Plain white shirt (half inch of cuff to show below tunic sleeve). No 1 dress tunic fitted with patrol collar. Sam Browne belt on duty, matching cloth belt off duty. No 1 dress trousers. Black or dark blue socks. Black shoes or Wellington boots. (Spurs optional for field officers).

#### 5) Mess Kit

Plain stiff fronted dress shirt with starched wing collar and black bow tie. Mess jacket, waist-coat and trousers. Black socks. Black patent or leather shoes.

**Notes on Dress:** The appropriate dress will normally be notified in orders. As a general rule however, battle dress or shirt sleeve order will be worn for working parades and training, while service dress or No 1 dress will be worn for ceremonial parades.

So far as training commitments permit, the Orderly Medical Officer will wear Service Dress or No 1 dress throughout his tour of duty, with Sam Browne belt. The belt will NOT be removed in the Mess. (Under no other circumstances should a Sam Browne belt be worn in the Mess).

No 1 dress is the correct uniform for official evening social functions, but Mess Kit may be worn with the prior approval of the Commanding Officer. (Approval must be sought for each occasion on which it is desired to wear Mess Kit).

**Miscellaneous:** Hair should be kept as short as possible round the neck and at the sides. The minimum of hair should be visible when the cap is worn.

Web equipment must be kept in good condition. The belt and anklets, being in almost constant wear, should be treated with web blanco at least twice a week and the brasses polished daily. It will generally suffice if the remainder of the equipment is treated with web blanco weekly during periods of full time training. Both for comfort and smartness it is important that web equipment should be correctly adjusted. Once this has been done, small ink marks on the inner sides of the various constituents will enable rapid readjustment to be made after cleaning.

In the Mess, all officers are considered to be equal, but courtesy demands that the Commanding Officer be treated with reasonable deference.

On parade, all officers senior to oneself must be addressed as 'Sir'.

Other Rank members of the Territorial Army are subject to Military Law only from the time that they report on parade, except during periods of full time training at Annual Camp or weekends. Officers are continually subject to Military Law so long as they remain on the active list of the Territorial Army. This means that if an officer commits an offence at any time, he may be tried by a Court Martial. Such a trial may be instead of trial by a civilian court. If any officer is found guilty of such an offence in a civilian court he may be required to resign his commission.

**Additional Note On Dress:** Officers should carry brown leather gloves and a cane when walking out. ♦

# Recollections Of The Past In 17th General Hospital

Lt Col A J Heber

I joined the 17th General Hospital in 1950 having completed by 18 months full-time National Service. We were required in those days to serve in the TA for a further 4 years. Many of us remained in the TA as volunteers after this compulsory service.

The 17th was based at the Duke of Yorks HQ until 1961, where it shared the Officers Mess with 10th General Hospital. There were no detachments.

At that time the forces in UK were divided into regional commands and we came under SE Command HQ at Hounslow. One W/E course for officers per annum was held there, but no training directives were sent out and unit training was mainly at the discretion of the CO and PSO/Training Officer. Annual Camp was usually in the SE Command area, ie. at Keogh, Crookham, Colchester (Fuigringhoe), Thetford or Kings Lynn (Stiffkey), though we did sometimes go to BAOR. We had training on the field and often at a camp at Vange, near Southend, a favourite site of Derek Samuels, our QM. These camps were always great fun, but I don't think the training was very serious or directed to make us fit for any particular role as a unit.

Many of our officers had served in the war. Most were consultants, some very well known, or became so later, as the list below shows. The permanent staff consisted of the PSO/Training Officer, the RSM and one or two clerks. Many old members of 17th will remember the late Maj Stevenson or "Steve" who was PSO for several years in those early days. Always accompanied by his Dalmation dog and his pipe, he seemed to organise training and everything else, too. Some others I remember well, with their civilian jobs are listed below.

**Bill Tucker (CO & Honorary Col)** A well known specialist in sports injuries. An international Rugby player. His family owned a lot of property in Bermuda. Always a very generous host.

**Neville Oswald (CO & Honorary Col)** Physician at Barts. Very keen Bridge player.

**Morris Lloyd-Owen (CO)** Anaesthetist at St Marys. Also a well known Rugby player. Specialist in ingenious practical jokes.

**Fynne Lindal (CO)** ENT Surgeon at The London. Enjoyed playing his accordion at camp.

**Claud Nichol (CO)** Venereologist at Barts and St Thomas's. Keen tennis player and at getting up parties. Took over as CO of 217 at the re-organisation in 1967.

**Geoff Howe (CO of 217)** Professor of Dental Surgery, Dean of faculty of Dental Surgery RCS.

**John Walter** Pathologist at RCS and author of well known text book. Later emigrated to Canada.

**Raymond Vale** Anaesthetist, Guys.

**Geoff Hadfield** Surgeon Stoke Mandeville and Vice President RCS.

**Derek Graff** Orthopaedic Surgeon, Oswestry.

**John Evans** ENT Surgeon, St Thomas's.

**John Blandy** Professor of Urological Surgery, The London Hospital.

John Currie Neurosurgeon Barts.

Tony Wallace Plastic Surgeon, Barts and Consultant to the Army.

John Seale Venereologist.

David Watson Ophthalmologist, Guys.

Robin Watson-Baker Radiologist, Whitehaven Hospital.

Barry Smith Anaesthetist, Moorfields Hospital.

"Pym" Pimblett Radiologist, Mayday Hospital.

John Sergeant Surgeon, Shotley Bridge Hospital.

Stuart Curtiss Radiologist.

Alan Rees Pathologist RCS.

Ian Fentman Surgeon, Guys.

Alan Fuller ENT Surgeon.



The then DGAMS, Sir Harold Knott, with Maj John Heber; then PMC, at a 17th General Hospital  
Regimental Dinner 1962

## Non-Medical Officers

### Wally Townsend

Served in 1st London General Hospital in 1939 as WO2. Finished his service as Registrar in the 17th General Hospital in rank of Major.

### Ronnie Wren

Joined TA aged 17 in 1920. Was a sergeant in 140 Fel Ambulance by 1938. Served in the 17th General Hospital as Personnel Officer with rank of Captain.

### Jim Payne

Joined 17th General Hospital as a Corporal in 1952 after completing National Service in Malaya. Rose to become Technical Officer in 217 with rank of Captain.

### Derek Samuel MBE

QM for many years. See separate section on his career. ♦

## 167 (City of London) Field Ambulance

The history of TA Field Ambulances is older than that of General Hospitals and can be traced back to 1883 when Sir James Cantlie of Charing Cross Hospital recruited the first company of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps from his own medical students. The VNSC flourished and before long, more companies were formed in London and also in Edinburgh, Manchester, Leeds, Maidstone, Woolwich and Dublin. Cantlie's idea was that the volunteers, after qualifying, would join volunteer regiments as medical officers and increase knowledge of first aid. By 1893 the Corps numbered 1,443 and in 1908, when the Territorial Army was formed, it became the Royal Army Medical Corps Territorial Force. In the 1914-18 war three London Field Ambulances had been formed from this Force and one of these eventually became 167 (City of London) Field Ambulance which served with distinction with 56th London Division in World War II, in UK, Iraq, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy.

When the Territorial Army was re-constituted in May 1947, 167 (City of London) Field Ambulance was based at Finsbury Barracks, City Road, sharing the site with the Honourable Artillery Company. Here it finally became part of 217 (London) General Hospital as its City Detachment.

(This account is from a paper by Maj G H Barker, written for the unit in 1985.)

## 24 (Eastern) Field Dressing Station

24 (Eastern) Field Dressing Station which itself had some years earlier incorporated the 4th (Eastern) CCS at Eastbourne, was based at the TA Centre, Dyke Road, Brighton. Although a small unit, it had distinguished itself by winning the TA Ambulance Challenge Shield in 1965 and 1966. When it became incorporated into 217 (London) General Hospital as its Brighton Detachment in 1967, personnel from there helped to win the Challenge Shield again in 1968 and 1969.

## 217 (London) General Hospital RAMC (V)

### Contribution To Historical Background

By Col E P W Tatford

In the years following World War II, there were two medical units in the TA in Sussex.

4 (Eastern) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (TA) was based at the TA Centre at Seaside, Eastbourne under the command of Colonel T Henry Wilson. He was a Consultant General Surgeon in the Eastbourne Group of Hospitals. Evening training was largely concerned with individual trade training, while weekend and in-camp training was largely devoted to setting up and running Field Hospitals and Field Surgical Teams.

In 1952 4(E) CCS won the UK TA Challenge Shield.

24 (Eastern) Field Dressing Station RAMC (TA) was sited at Preston Barracks, Brighton under the command of Major W.F. de C. Veale - a General Medical Practitioner in Hove. Training was devoted to individual trades and to practice in the Divisional role.

In 1959 the then Commanding Officer of the FDS, Major J. Vance (a General Medical Practitioner in Brighton) was promoted to command 47 Field Ambulance RAMC at Godalming. His successor in command was Major E.P.W. Tatford - a Hospital Gynaecologist.

In 1961 reorganisation in the TA resulted in the disbandment of 4 (E) CCS then under the command of Lt Col J L Digby Roberts a Private Medical Practitioner in Brighton. Personnel were transferred to 24 (E) FDS whose HQ remained in Brighton with a detachment being established in Eastbourne. Subsequently the FDS still under the command of Major Tatford established a further detachment at Chichester and also moved the headquarters from Preston Barracks to the Dyke Road, TA Centre where they had considerably enhanced accommodation being separately housed in the original Dyke House.

By then, a three year training cycle had been established, one year being spent in individual trade training particularly medical assistant for the RAMC personnel while the large RASC and REME element of the Unit embarked their Corps trades particularly driving and motor maintenance. Annual camp training involved attachment to the Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich and the Military Hospitals at Shorncliffe and Catterick. A second year was spent exercising the divisional role together with the other medical units in 44 (Home Counties) Division - 47 and 113 Field Ambulances. Divisional exercises were held at annual camps held at such places as Castlemartin, South Wales and Stanford in Norfolk. The third year was a "Green Fields" annual camp where the unit exercised quite independently in an area of its own choice. This year was much appreciated with camps being spent at Woolacombe in Devon and Caerhays Castle in Cornwall. Here the unit exercised its role as a Beach Dressing Station in assault landings and as an area evacuation unit amongst other divisional and corps roles which also involved setting up under NBC conditions in deep cellars in Chatham.

In 1965 the FDS went to Germany to support the 30 Field Ambulance in providing medical cover for HM Queen's review and inspection of the Armoured Units of 1st British Corps. This camp also provided a great opportunity for the Unit to become familiar with its War role.

During these times, the FDS enjoyed the distinction of being the only minor medical unit in Eastern Command and it was therefore with satisfaction that the unit won the Eastern Command Medical Transport Exercise competition in the first year (1965) of its award. This included a cross country rally using Austin Champs - a preferable drive to a Land Rover.

In the following year, the Unit repeated its win and also gained the Grech Cup also in the first year of its award. This cup was given for the best all round efficiency as evidenced by the Annual Administrative Inspection, Recruiting, Range Classification, Annual Camp and the various competitions held during the year. In 1966 the Unit won the Divisional Medical Shooting Competition, the Walkover Tough Training Competition and once again were runners up in the UK TA Challenge Shield.

The success of the Unit was marred by the death of Captain W.T.D. Gray from acute leptosporosis following soon after his participation in the Walkover competition.

In 1965 the Unit Team led by Major E P W Tatford won the United Kingdom Final of the TA Ambulance Challenge Shield beating nine other units in the preliminary Eastern Command round. In 1966 the FDS again won with a greater margin of marks. This brought the unique distinction of the FDS being the only minor medical unit ever to have won the Shield, let alone two years running. On both occasions the Cowell Cup for the Thomas Splint Competition was also gained.

In 1967 24 (E) FDS was disbanded as an independent Medical Unit being converted into a Detachment of the new 217 (London) General Hospital. ♦

# "Gunfire" & Pte Muchmore

Col John Sergeant

In the past, the rigors of sleeping under canvas were alleviated by the arrival of early morning cups of tea, carried round the lines by two mess waiters, one of whom was Private Muchmore ACC, who was a Cockney barrow boy in his civilian capacity. He would put his head into the tent and call out "Wiv or Wivaht" meaning with or without sugar. The matron replied once that she did not take sugar or milk in her tea. "This one's wivaht neither!" Muchmore shouted to his mate.

He left the unit on obtaining a job as a gardener with the Southend Council. He knew nothing whatever about gardening but got the job because he knew the names of a few plants. He had looked these up at the local library on his way to the interview, so he told us...♦