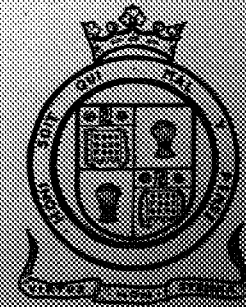


Westminster Memorial Hospital

Shaftesbury



1871-1971

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A SHORT HISTORY
of the
WESTMINSTER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
SHAFTESBURY, DORSET

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THE CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOSPITAL
in 1871

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PART I

1871—1948

by

William Farley Rutter

It is thought that it may be of interest to set down a short account of the Westminster Memorial Hospital at Shaftesbury, Dorset, from its inception until taken over by the National Health Service on the 5th July 1948.

The project arose in 1870 out of a desire to honour the memory of Richard, second Marquis of Westminster, KG, who had owned large estates in and around Shaftesbury and who had done much to improve the lot of his tenants. A public meeting was held at which it was decided that an appropriate memorial would be the building of a Cottage Hospital which would be of great benefit to people living in the Town and neighbourhood and in line with what the late Marquis would have wished. In furtherance of this decision a Committee of the Gentlemen of the neighbourhood was formed to raise subscriptions and carry the project through.

The proposal met with the approval of the Dowager Marchioness who gave a site for the building adjoining Park Walk and Abbey Walk, and contributed the sum of £2,000 to start an endowment fund. Plans were submitted to the Committee, and those of Mr. J. B. Corby of Stamford, Lincolnshire, were accepted, and out of forty-one builders who tendered for the work of erection Mr. C. J. Miles of Shaftesbury was accepted at the sum of £1,430.

Foundation Stone Laying

The foundation stone of the Cottage Hospital was laid by Lady Theodora Grosvenor in the presence of a large gathering of people from the town and neighbourhood, notwithstanding inclement weather. The proceedings were started by the Mayor of Shaftesbury, Mr. W. K. Fricker, delivering the following address:

"As Mayor of this ancient Borough, and representing my fellow townsmen, I am desirous to express to you, Lady Theodora Grosvenor, our hearty thanks for the readiness with which you complied with our request to assist at the present ceremonial. We this day meet to lay the first stone of a building to be raised as a memorial to your late revered father—a building to be devoted to the relief of the sick poor of this town

and neighbourhood. When we look around on the public buildings, on the admirable dwellings of the labouring class, built at your father's sole cost, and under his personal direction, all tending to improve and raise the condition of the people, we venture to hope in erecting a Cottage Hospital that we are acting in accordance with his life-long desire to benefit this town and district. We trust that the Divine blessing may rest on the undertaking, and that the Hospital, when completed, may for generations to come afford comfort and relief to its inmates during the trying hours of sickness. Now Lady Theodora, earnestly praying that the Divine blessing may also attend the Dowager Marchioness and yourself, and that you may make it your life-long desire to alleviate human suffering, as did he to whom we raise this memorial, I ask you to lay the foundation stone."

Lady Theodora replied as follows:

"I thank you very sincerely for the kind manner in which you have expressed the feelings of yourself and your fellow townsmen on this occasion, and I assure you that it was with more than ordinary gratification that I accepted the invitation to take part in the ceremonial of today. The object of the Cottage Hospital, about to be erected to the memory of my father, by those who truly valued and appreciated him, is so entirely in accordance with the spirit and chief aim of his life—the relief of sickness, of sorrow, and of suffering—that we cannot fail to feel that the influence which guided his path, while he lived amongst us, still dwells in the neighbourhood of the home and country he loved, and in this town in whose welfare he ever took so deep an interest. I trust with you that a blessing from on high may rest upon this good undertaking. I am now going with deep gratification to lay the foundation stone of a building which will stand for long years to come, a memorial of my father—and a proof of the affection and esteem in which he was held by his friends and neighbours, so many of whom have met here today to do honour to his memory."

Her ladyship, who was handed a silver trowel by the builder, Mr. Miles, then laid the stone. Underneath was deposited a bottle containing a copy of "The Times" and a parchment upon which was the following inscription:

"Shaftesbury—Westminster Memorial Cottage Hospital. The first stone of this building, erected by voluntary subscriptions in memory of Richard, second Marquis of Westminster, KG, was laid by his daughter, the Lady Theodora Grosvenor, on Thursday, 25th May 1871. W. K. Fricker, Mayor."

Management and Financing

The Hospital was designed to furnish accommodation for six patients and a small Hospital staff. It was to be under the overall management of the body of Subscribers who were to meet annually and appoint a Committee responsible for the running of the Hospital and reporting to the Subscribers at their Annual Meeting.

The expenses of running the Hospital were to be met from the annual subscriptions, the income from the endowment fund and small fees to be charged to patients. The hospital was to be for the poor of the town and neighbourhood excluding those on Parish Relief and the weekly payments to be made by patients were to be from 2/- to 8/- according to circumstances. There was no Medical Staff, it being understood that patients would be attended by their own Doctors. Any person wishing to be admitted had to obtain and present a ticket of recommendation from a Subscriber together with a recommendation from a Doctor, save in the case of serious accidents which could be admitted without such a ticket.

Opening Ceremony

The Hospital was opened on 16th March, 1874 by the Lord Bishop of Salisbury and according to the first Annual Report forty patients were admitted in the first year.

Although the Hospital was planned on modest lines the question of how to find the money to pay the necessary costs of running the Hospital was a major problem. As mentioned above any receipts from patients were bound to be small. The only other source of income was from Subscribers and a small endowment income. In the early days it seems that the income from the Subscribers increased considerably and that for some years the cost was covered in this way. Annual Reports to the Subscribers were prepared but unfortunately these are missing from 1876 to 1892.

The Patron of the Hospital was the Dowager Marchioness of Westminster who died in 1892 and her son Richard de Aquila, Baron Stalbridge, was then appointed Patron of the Hospital. There is a record that the expenditure in this year was £493 and that the number of patients treated in the Hospital since its opening numbered 910. From time to time various gifts of money were made to the Hospital increasing the Endowment Fund and thus increasing its income, and according to the report to the Annual Meeting of Subscribers in 1907 the Endowment Fund stood at £4,883. When thinking of the cost of running the Hospital we must recollect that the purchasing power of the pound was much greater than it has since become, which is illustrated by the following prices in 1906: Milk, 9d per gallon. Bread, 4d a loaf. Best Radstock Coal, 22s 9d per ton delivered.

Operating Room

The first proposal to make any addition to the Hospital building came from Lady Theodora Guest in March 1907. After consultation with the Doctors attending at the Hospital and with their approval she asked the Hospital Committee to give her permission to build and equip an Operating Room, which was greatly needed, in memory of the Dowager Marchioness of Westminster. The proposal was gladly welcomed by the Committee who appointed certain members to confer with the Architect. The plans were approved and Mr. Wilkins was given the contract to build.

The work necessitated the closing of the Hospital from 17th July to the 2nd September.

At the Meeting of the Committee on 18th November 1907, the following letter was received:

"11th November 1907.

Gentlemen,

I am writing to beg you to accept and incorporate into your Hospital the operating room which I have just built. I have endeavoured to make it as complete as possible with the best up-to-date fittings and have supplied the most necessary instruments. I have a peculiar pleasure in presenting it to you today as it is the sixteenth anniversary of my mother's death, and in dedicating it to her. I link the name of the never forgotten Marchioness of Westminster with that of the Marquis to whose memory the Hospital was erected, for she was always a warm sympathiser in his good works and often the prompter of them. It is gratifying to me that their Memorials should thus be united. I believe that the room is now fit for immediate use and I trust it will long be the means of relieving suffering and saving life.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Yours truly,

Theodora Guest"

and the Hospital Committee gratefully accepted the gift and expressed pleasure that it will ever be a memorial to her Ladyship's mother, the Marchioness of Westminster.

The above mentioned provision of an operating room was a considerable step forward in increasing the usefulness of the institution and in paving the way for further development in the future. In 1909 central heating was installed for the Wards and operating room. It is clear from the Minutes of the Committee that in 1910 the funds of the Hospital were very low and that if the good work of the Hospital was to continue further financial support

would be necessary. In these circumstances the Shaftesbury Carnival Committee started to support the Hospital and in November 1910 handed over to the Committee £36.15.0 and at the same time Miss S. A. Dunn, the proprietor of the Girls' High School, handed over £12.4.6, both sums being very welcome.

From this time onwards for many years the Shaftesbury Carnival Committee devoted the net proceeds of the Carnival for the support of the Hospital and on some occasions the Gillingham Carnival Committee also helped. By December 1912 the amount received from the Shaftesbury Carnival had risen to £130.

In March 1913 we get some hint of a possible outbreak of war when the Committee decided that in the event of foreign invasion the Hospital Authorities will place at the disposal of the Red Cross Society a certain number of beds and the use of the operating room and appliances.

X-ray Apparatus

The next important development proposal was that of installing the X-ray apparatus, and in 1914 the Shaftesbury Carnival Committee offered to place £130 to deposit account earmarked for the installation of an X-ray apparatus and £50 to current account which was gladly accepted by the Hospital Committee. However the matter was deferred and it was not until April 1919 that an X-ray apparatus was installed.

In 1914 six beds were added in the existing building to furnish accommodation for sick or wounded soldiers. About this time a Linen Guild was set up which proved of very great help to the Hospital in the following years. It is also noted that the average number of patients treated nearly doubled in 1914.

In May 1919 a very welcome gift of £721.3.1 was received from the Farmers Club and it was decided that two members of the Farmers Club should serve on the Hospital Committee.

Although the Shaftesbury Carnival was continuing to give very considerable financial assistance to the Hospital, the cost of running the Hospital was increasing and the charge to patients had to be raised. There was a definite feeling that the Hospital needed more support, and in order to achieve this the Rules were altered in 1921 to increase the representation on the Committee of Management.

In the Annual Report presented to the Subscribers in January 1922 it was stated that gratitude was the keynote of the year's work which had shown itself in letters from patients, in donations and subscriptions, and splendid financial backing generally. The

Shaftesbury Carnival beat all records and had not yet reached its zenith. The Church collections were larger than usual. The number of patients in the Hospital during the year was two hundred and five, giving an average of thirteen days for each patient. Out of this total one hundred and forty-nine were operation cases and twenty-two accidents.

On 19th June, 1923 it was decided to install the telephone. Unfortunately in this year there appeared a good deal of feeling on the part of the Carnival Committee that there should be a change of Matron. This necessitated the Management Committee carefully going into the matter but they felt that the Matron was carrying out her duties to their satisfaction. The Carnival Committee then decided to hold no Carnival that year which meant a loss of financial support to the Hospital. The upshot was that in September 1923 the Matron sent in her resignation which was accepted and this necessitated the closing of the Hospital from 18th October until the 8th December, 1923.

Re-organisation of Management

As the general position was unsatisfactory a special meeting of subscribers was held on 14th November, 1923 at which the whole position was explained and it was reported that a Sub-Committee had been set up to go into the question of the re-organisation of the Hospital and present a report to the General Meeting in January. The Committee asked the Regional Committee of the British Hospitals Association to advise on the re-organisation of the Hospital and its Rules and general management, and they appointed three persons to investigate and advise.

As a result of their report the Management Committee drew up fresh rules which were put before the Subscribers' Meeting on 25th January, 1924 and after considerable discussion adopted. The new rules continued the annual meeting of subscribers but provided that there should be a Grand Committee which included a wide representation and a House Committee which should report to the Grand Committee. The House Committee was to consist of the Chairman of the Grand Committee, its Hon. Treasurer, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Almoner, the Mayor of Shaftesbury and five members to be elected by ballot by the Grand Committee and two members of the medical staff. It was further provided that the House Committee was to be the Executive Committee of the Hospital and have its general management and the right to engage the Matron.

The new set-up proved to work satisfactorily and the Shaftesbury Carnival was revived and raised the sum of £381 from which £150 was invested for the Hospital in 3½% Conversion Loan 1968 and £200 to be paid to the Hospital in quarterly instalments.

Shaftesbury Hospital League

At this time it was also decided to affiliate with the Salisbury General Infirmary for a trial period of one year. It became obvious about this time that some attention should be paid to the necessary cost of running the Hospital and how best to provide the necessary income. The idea of running a Hospital League had already been tried out at Salisbury. On 13th February, 1928 the House Committee warmly supported the formation of a Shaftesbury Hospital League and on the 11th June, 1928, at the invitation of the Shaftesbury Hospital League, two members of the House Committee were appointed to represent the Hospital. The formation of the Shaftesbury Hospital League was of great benefit both to the Hospital and through the Hospital to members of the public.

The basis of the League was that members paid regular contributions to the League and the League paid the Hospital charges for any member who went into the Hospital. The starting and running of the Shaftesbury Hospital League involved a great deal of voluntary time and effort on the part of many people whose service to the Hospital and the general public is worthy of all praise.

Extension of Hospital

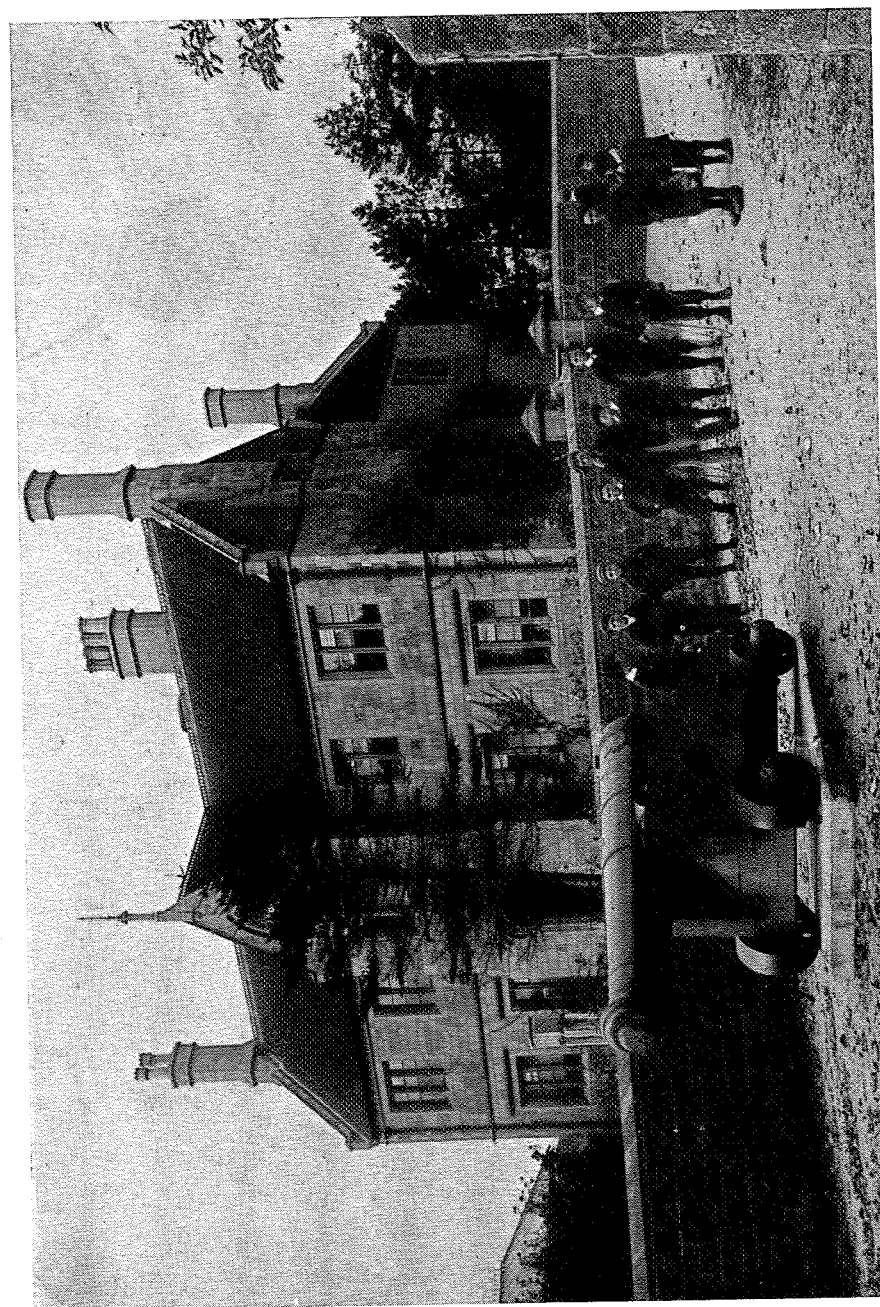
The next matter requiring attention was the inadequacy of the accommodation and this was brought before the House Committee on 9th July, 1928 by the Nursing Staff who wrote calling attention to the inadequacy of the accommodation both for staff and patients. The House Committee, after careful consideration, made a recommendation to the Grand Committee to consider the building of a Nurses' Home and thus extend the accommodation available for staff and patients. The Grand Committee concurring, a General Meeting of Subscribers was held on 31st July, 1928 to consider the position, and resolutions were carried unanimously that extra hospital accommodation was needed and instructing the House Committee to take steps to provide a house for the Nursing Staff to accomplish this, and further that the House Committee be authorised to use its judgment and discretion with regard to the purchase of land necessary for the purpose. The House Committee was offered land to the west of the Hospital by Mr. Browning and agreed to purchase at the price of £500. Mr. Browning generously handing back £100 towards the cost. This acquisition made the task of hospital extension much easier, but the question of raising money for the Hospital Extension was considered and it was decided to start an Appeal for funds, the Mayor to act as Chairman of the Appeal Committee with a Committee half appointed by the Hospital and half by the town. Further it was agreed that no building should start until £1,000 new money was in hand or promised. The Mayor (Mr. J. A. Norton) called a public meeting

on 8th March, 1929 to further the Appeal, which was well attended. The scheme proposed by Mr. M. A. Sisson, FRIBA, to enlarge the Hospital by building new accommodation for patients and to improve the accommodation of the Staff in the existing building was explained by Mr. W. Farley Rutter who stressed the urgent need for the extension and intimated that the probable cost would be in the region of £7,000. The Meeting unanimously supported the Mayor's Appeal for funds and the Mayor intimated that he had already received £1,000. At a Meeting of the Grand Committee held on 23rd July, 1929 plans were produced for the Hospital Extension. In these plans provision was made for a further eight beds on the ground floor, storage for patients' clothes, and a ward kitchen and nurses' station to provide patients' night food where necessary. There was also to be a terrace with direct access to the new wards, and sunlight treatment could be given on the flat roof. The new wing also provided anaesthetising and sterilising rooms and complete lavatory and bathroom accommodation. A further result of the extension would be a very great improvement in the sanitation and bathroom accommodation of the old building which had always been greatly cramped, and all the nursing staff would be housed on the premises, giving a considerable saving of expense.

Whilst all this activity was proceeding Mr. Archibald Mein, MRCP, FRCS, was appointed Hon. Consulting Surgeon to the Hospital on the 9th April, 1929, and the offer of Sir Thomas Horder to become Honorary Consulting Physician to the Hospital was accepted with much appreciation on 20th August, 1929.

The Hospital Extension was opened by The Duke of Somerset on 11th June, 1930 in the presence of a large gathering from the town of Shaftesbury and the surrounding district. Before the public ceremony the Medical Staff, the Matron (Mrs. Ingram Gelf) and the Nursing Staff, the Architect (Mr. M. A. Sisson of London), the builders (Messrs. Williams Bros.) and the Mayor (Mr. J. D. Chesterfield) and other members and officials of the Town Council assembled in the corridor of the extension and were introduced to the Duke and Duchess, who afterwards inspected the building. In the course of the proceedings the Chairman of the Hospital (Mr. John Hastings) referred to the magnificent efforts of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Norton, the present Mayor (Mr. Chesterfield) and Mrs. Chesterfield, The Hon. Treasurer (Mr. S. Rawlins) and others in raising the £3,500 in hand to pay for the work. The Archdeacon of Dorset (Canon W. Oker Parish) dedicated the new premises. The Duchess then accepted purses in aid of the Building Fund which contained about £250.

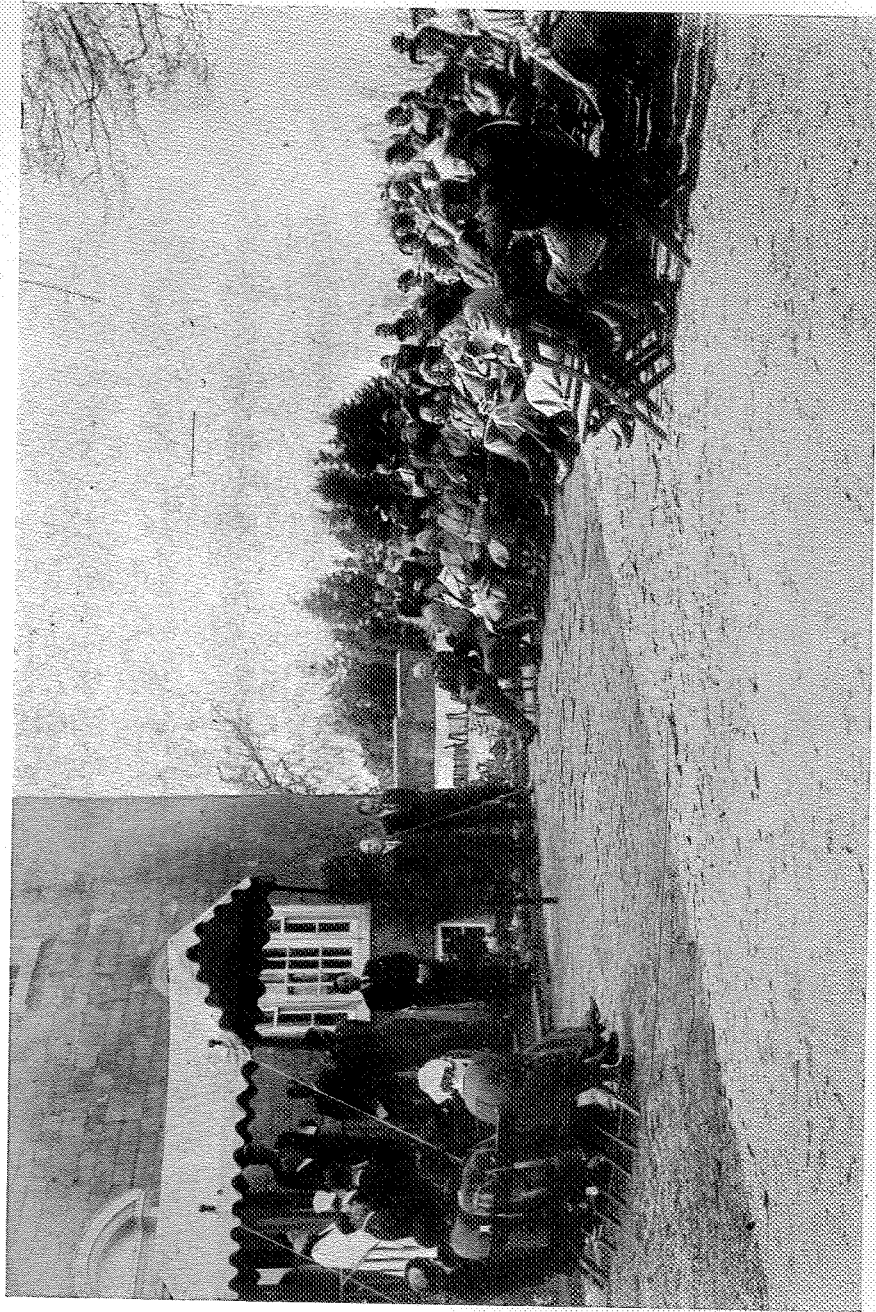
About this time there were added to the Consultants, Mr. Gerald E. Thornton as Radiologist and Mr. C. R. Salkeld for Ear, Nose and Throat cases.



The Hospital about 1900



The Shaftesbury Carnival Queen at the entrance to the Hospital in 1932



The opening ceremony of Castle Hill House as the maternity annexe in 1949



The Hospital in 1971

Out-patients Department

With the Extension the work of the Hospital increased and we find that in the year ended 30th September, 1931 the number of bed days occupied was 5,268, and the number of patients admitted 588; both substantial increases over the year before. Dr. David Arnott put before the Hospital Committee the desirability of building an Out-patients Department and Maternity Wards and a Children's Ward, and promised to raise a fund for the purpose. The proposal was generally approved by the Committee on the understanding that Dr. Arnott would raise £2,000 towards the cost. Various plans and variations were considered and ultimately it was decided to build the Out-patients Department, Ward kitchen, Doctors' room and staff lavatories, but not the suggested Wards. Ultimately a tender of £3,768 from Messrs. Wallis Jones was accepted and it was anticipated that with Architect's fee to pay and certain other items, the total cost would be £4,198. The Hospital had certain funds available but there would be need to raise a further £1,000 and Dr. Arnott agreed to start another extension fund appeal.

On the 29th June, 1938 the Earl and Countess of Shaftesbury performed the opening ceremony of the Hospital Out-patients Department and later on the same day a meeting was held in the Savoy Cinema which was well attended and purses containing contributions to the cost of the Extension were received.

Shortly after this an intimation was received that it was intended to group the Hospitals in certain regions, and asking what were the wishes of this Hospital. The Committee intimated that they wished to be grouped with Salisbury, and this proposal was accepted.

At the Annual General Meeting of subscribers held on the 15th March, 1939 it was reported that the new Out-patient Department had proved a tremendous asset to the Hospital in efficiency and comfort and that there only remained £221 on the new building account which had not been raised by contributions. It was also reported that Mr. Taylor Young, FRCS, of Salisbury had joined the Consulting Staff.

War-time Measures

By this time, in view of the possible outbreak of war, the Government were taking steps to provide for any possible emergency which might arise. To this end, at the request of the Ministry of Health, Mr. J. D. Chesterfield was appointed to act on behalf of the Hospital and it was also decided that the Out-patient Department should be used as the Aid Post for Shaftesbury. It was also reported that the County Medical Officer had agreed to the two, two-bedded wards being used for abnormal maternity cases, and it was decided to erect a temporary partition in the corridor to shut off the maternity

block. On the 18th November 1939 the House Committee was informed that Dr. David Arnott had been called up for military service.

At the Grand Committee Meeting on 16th September 1940 it was reported that there had been 22 military in-patients and many military out-patients in June and July. In the report of the House Committee for 1941 it was stated "the increase in the number of in-patients is largely due to the great demand for maternity beds (60 in 1941 as against 14 in 1940) and this demand has been increased by the facilities offered by the County Council's Maternity Scheme. The existing four maternity beds proved quite insufficient and another ward of four beds was reserved for maternity cases as a war-time emergency measure. A Labour Ward was fitted up with a special labour bed and other necessary equipment.

During the War years the Hospital had a struggle to keep going under very difficult circumstances, but it was well supported by the general public and in particular the financial support from the Hospital League was of the greatest assistance. One of the special features of this period was the growth in the number of maternity cases as shown by the following figures: 79 in 1943, 90 in 1944 and 112 in 1945; and in addition the Ante Natal Clinic had an average attendance of 40 per month.

Maternity Section of Castle Hill House

The Committee had to take account of the proposals which were being put forward for a National Health Service and to watch the future very carefully. But whatever the future might bring, one thing seemed to stand out, and that was the increasing demand for maternity beds and the desirability of having a maternity section of the Hospital separate from the general hospital wards. If this could be accomplished the existing hospital wards would all be available for their proper use. At this particular time Castle Hill House with its garden and outbuildings came into the market and the House Committee decided that this property could be adapted to house the Maternity department and provide additional staff accommodation. In view of the impending take-over of the Hospital by the National Health Service the Committee got into touch with the Ministry of Health and took steps to negotiate a purchase of Castle Hill House. As it was imperative to get things fixed up quickly the Secretary, the Rev. R. D. T. Lowe, and Mr. W. Farley Rutter were asked to go to London and interview the Ministry of Health with regard to the acquisition of Castle Hill House and its adaptation for hospital purposes. At this interview satisfactory terms were arrived at which were confirmed by letter and which were accepted by the House

Committee. Accordingly the purchase of Castle Hill House was completed, architects were instructed to prepare plans for its adaptation to Hospital purposes and the following paragraph appeared in the Report of the House Committee in 1946:

"The need for more beds, and for more staff quarters, has become very urgent, and the Committee have, with the full approval and assistance of the Ministry of Health, bought Castle Hill House for the Maternity side of the Hospital. When the necessary alterations have been made, and the necessary fittings and furniture installed (only no-one can say when that will be, especially as all plans have to be approved by the Ministry) this will provide 11 maternity beds and accommodation for a considerable staff, including the night staff of the Hospital, and so will meet several urgent needs. Further, the beds now used for maternity will revert to general use."

It took a good deal of negotiation with the Ministry before work on the alterations to Castle Hill House could be put in hand, but matters were finally agreed and the work undertaken by Williams Bros. for the general contract and Garton & King of Exeter for the heating system. Owing to the delays the work was not completed before the Hospital was taken over by the National Health Service.

During the War a decontamination block had been added adjoining the West side of the Hospital corridor connecting the main Hospital with the Out-patients department. It was now decided to turn this into an X-ray room with a dark room for developing etc., a physiotherapy room, a small laboratory and a proper office for the Matron. This work was carried out with funds advanced by the Government and a full time Physiotherapist was appointed and the department was put under the direction of Dr. Russell Grant of Salisbury Infirmary and Dr. Wakeman of Salisbury Infirmary was appointed Radiologist.

From the point of view of finance the Government required the Hospital to sell all its invested funds in the hands of the Trustees, except such legacies or gifts as had been made for a special object. The sale of these securities realised £1,489. The rest of the money needed was advanced by the Government. The remaining Trustee, held securities were taken over by the Government, as in other Hospitals, and certain sections of the National Health Service Act regulate the manner in which they may be used.

The Hospital was taken over by the National Health Service on 5th July 1948, at a time when there was a considerable advance in the average cost per patient, in the number of maternity cases and ante-natal attendances, in X-ray work, and the number of out-patient attendances.

The Hospital, as taken over by the National Health Service, was an institution which over the years had been of inestimable benefit to the people of Shaftesbury and District, and was in very good order and condition at the time of the take-over.

We have traced the growth of the Westminster Memorial Hospital at Shaftesbury over a period of seventy-four years, starting as a Cottage Hospital with six beds and expanding over the years into a Hospital with six wards for patients, an operating theatre, an out-patient department and subsidiary services, as well as a separate maternity block with additional staff accommodation; a period which included two devastating World Wars. During the whole of this period it was a voluntary institution made possible and supported by the general public in such various ways as we have seen. We conclude with a just tribute to all those whose voluntary work and assistance over long periods, and often in difficult circumstances, made such a valuable contribution to the health and happiness of the people of Shaftesbury and its surrounding district.

PART II

1948—1971

In 1948 the Westminster Memorial Hospital, already the proud possessor of a fine record of public service, began a new chapter in its life—as part of the National Health Service.

Those destined to write the first pages of its new life, in the shape of the newly-formed Shaftesbury House Committee, were:

Councillor J. D. Chesterfield (Chairman)
Miss P. M. Sharples
Councillor C. J. Lee
Commander O. G. C. Leveson-Gower
Mr. H. S. Taylor-Young, FRCS

One of its first actions was to appoint to the Committee Dr. D. Arnott as a representative of the area's General Practitioners. Dr. Arnott and his colleagues, Dr. Chapman and Dr. Lees, were re-appointed to the hospital staff.

Increasing pressures on the hospital's facilities had been evident for some time and it was not long before the Matron pressed for more staff, including nurses, cooks, kitchen maids and cleaners.

Extra clerks were engaged in early 1949 but the post of Assistant Secretary was dissolved, the incumbent, the Rev. R. D. T. Lowe being appointed to the Committee. Members were pleased to receive legacies of £1,000 from the Estate of the late Miss E. K. Virtue Tebbs and £25 from that of the late Miss Fanny Short. Revised estimates for 1949/50 showed that £14,070 had been allocated for the year.

The Friends of the Hospital, ever-willing to provide extra comforts and amenities, were asked to install a £146 twin programme wireless system at the main hospital and a £60 radio set for Castle Hill House.

Provision for the Chronic Sick

The "saga of the chronic sick" developed in July 1949. Members of the House Committee were disturbed that the closure of Alcester House would mean that there was no accommodation for the chronic sick within a 20-mile radius of Shaftesbury. This, they said, would put patients too far away from relatives and so the South West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board was pressed to take over Alcester House from Dorset County Council and provide 40 chronic sick beds for the Shaftesbury community.

The Board, however, asked the Committee to consider erecting a hutted annexe in the grounds of Westminster Memorial Hospital for this purpose. Members decided, in November 1949, that this suggestion was impractical although it was thought a hospital extension might be possible.

Two years later the problem had still to resolve itself and the Committee asked the local Planning Authority to allocate the whole of the cinema car park and the adjacent walled garden to provide accommodation for the chronic sick.

In May 1952, the Planning Committee replied that it was not at present allocating individual sites but considered that, providing sufficient space was left for cinema patrons' cars, the site could be used to advantage for hospital purposes. The best way to safeguard the site, it declared, was for it to be purchased. The House Committee decided to take no further action.

Members heard from the Matron that out-patient attendances at the hospital during the preceding year had risen by 1,000 partly because of more casualties having been treated. The average daily bed occupancy was 24 and the average stay of a patient was 14 days for maternity cases and 13 days for general cases.

A Dermatological Clinic was started at the hospital in 1952 and the year was also marked by a £500 legacy from the Estate of the late Mr. A. T. Scammell which was subsequently converted into British Transport 3% Guaranteed Stock. March 1953 saw the resignation of Miss J. Orgill, Matron of the hospital since July 1945. Six months later Miss E. Cobb was appointed her successor.

Central Heating Extended

The winter of 1953/54 heralded the agreement in February 1954 by the Regional Hospital Board that the installation of central heating in the Night Nurses' Quarters at Castle Hill House should be included in the Minor Capital Works Programme to be carried out in 1954/55. Funds were allocated in May 1954.

In March 1955, a report from the National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service on boiler house equipment at the hospital recommended that the services should be rearranged. Two boilers, one for domestic water and the other for central heating, should serve the whole hospital and be sited in the boiler house beneath the out-patients' department. An existing Britannia boiler would meet the domestic requirements but it would be necessary to replace a boiler for the central heating supply. Both appliances would be magazine or gravity fed and would need attention two or three times in 24 hours. The Secretary reported that the scheme had been included in the programmes for 1956/57 and 1957/58.

In July 1955 the still-to-be-solved problem of providing accommodation for the chronic sick raised its head again, prompted by an enquiry as to whether a local fund could be opened. The House Committee, still concerned that patients had to be admitted to hospitals outside the locality, recommended the Regional Board to make funds available to build two chronic sick wards at the Memorial Hospital. Later in the year, when it was heard that a suitable building would cost £15,000, consideration of the project was again deferred.

The following year the Regional Board allocated £600 for alterations and additions to the hospital's mortuary, work which was completed in 1957. The Estate of the late Mrs. C. C. Fort provided the hospital with £382.

Extending the Out-Patient Department

Dr. Chapman drew the Committee's attention to the need for additional accommodation in the out-patients' department, saying that there was considerable congestion particularly when ante-natal clinics were held. This could be relieved by the provision of an extra examination room. The Secretary commented that additional consulting/examination rooms and improvements to the Physiotherapy and X-ray Departments were included on the list for capital work but as the programme for the next three years had recently been agreed with the Regional Board, it was unlikely that this work could be undertaken in the near future.

Mr. B. Savage, a local architect, subsequently provided plans for extending the out-patients' department and, in 1958, the Committee noted general agreement that an additional consulting suite of two rooms with four examination cubicles, and a new X-ray Department should be provided by building an extension on the east side of the corridor leading to the out-patients' department. It was further agreed that the Physiotherapy Department should be enlarged by extending into the room vacated by the existing X-ray Department. The consulting room adjacent to the waiting hall should be divided to provide a small consulting room and treatment cubicles with access to the casualty theatres.

Later in the year, the Regional Board estimated the cost of the above work at £4,500 and the Committee recommended that priority should be given to it, adding that it was prepared to use £1,500 of its discretionary funds on the projects.

At the September 1958 meeting of the Committee, members paid tribute to the work of Mr. H. S. Taylor-Young, FRCS, a consultant surgeon and long-serving member, who was retiring from the Committee on 1st October. Alterations to the staff dining room

and the provision of a servery, at a total cost of £730, had been approved, the members heard at their December meeting.

On 11th February 1959, the Committee was told that the Rev. R. D. T. Lowe, a member of the House Committee since April 1949, had died at Salisbury General Infirmary on 1st January. Reference was made to the considerable work undertaken by the Rev. Lowe, both as Assistant Secretary from 1939-1948 and as a member of the Committee.

Development Plans

In 1961, the hospital received £641 and a mortgage deed for £100 from the Estate of the late Mr. F. E. Andrews. The regional hospital authority, by this time the Wessex Regional Hospital Board, included a new £100,000 chronic sick unit in its future plans for the hospital as well as £20,000 for the upgrading of ancillary departments including out-patients.

The Board also allocated funds for the upgrading of the main kitchen, for the installation of oil-fired equipment at Castle Hill House and for the insulation of the hospital's boiler house ceiling.

At the meeting of the Hospital Management Committee held on 25th May 1962, the resignation of Alderman J. D. Chesterfield from the Shaftesbury House Committee was received with great regret. The Chairman referred to the valuable work which Mr. Chesterfield had undertaken for the Hospital over very many years, and in accepting his resignation, the Committee agreed that their sincere thanks and appreciation should be conveyed to him. Mr. T. N. Hitchings, the Vice Chairman, succeeded him as Chairman, and in October of the same year Group Captain F. A. Willan, CBE, DFC, DL, was appointed to the House Committee. The following year the hospital again lost the services of one of its long standing friends and supporters when Mr. Hitchings himself retired from business and left the district. In May 1963 Group Captain Willan was elected Chairman of the House Committee.

The difficulty experienced in discharging chronic sick patients was raised at a meeting in May 1963 and Dr. Longridge referred to a proposal to provide beds at the hospital for these patients when funds became available.

A Regional Board plan for an extension to the out-patients' department was approved in principle by the House Committee in March 1965. The Committee also received a block plan which indicated that the proposed new department would not restrict future development required to provide beds for maternity and chronic sick patients.

In September 1965 members of the Committee stood in silence as a mark of respect for the late Dr. David Arnott, who died on 7th September 1965.

The retirement of Miss E. Cobb, the Hospital's Matron for 14 years, was announced at a meeting in January 1967. The Chairman expressed appreciation and thanks to Miss Cobb for "the enormous amount of work" she had undertaken and for the happy spirit which existed in the hospital. In March, Miss M. L. Norman was appointed Matron. It was reported that the Hospital Management Committee had agreed to the proposal that, when funds were available, patients at Castle Hill House should be re-accommodated at the main hospital site. In these circumstances, it was felt that the House should not be fully upgraded as a maternity unit, but that essential rewiring, minor repairs and redecoration should be undertaken. It was noted that further consideration was to be given to the overall development proposals for the hospital, including the need for long-stay beds and an examination of whether to continue general surgery and gynaecology sessions.

Members of the House Committee in May 1967 were Group Captain F. A. Willan, CBE, DFC, DL, (Chairman); Miss M. L. Young, OBE; Mrs. J. N. Arkell; Mrs. M. L. Linley; Mrs. I. K. Matthews; Mrs. G. Sampson; Dr. W. M. Chapman and Mr. D. H. G. Weall.

The Committee was told in September 1967 that a tender of £9,904 had been accepted for the upgrading of Castle Hill House. Gillingham and Shaftesbury Round Table agreed to meet the cost of refurnishing the patients' day room at the House.

An envisaged population increase in the area from 3,450 to 8,800 by 1981 was announced to the House Committee in March 1968 and members agreed that future plans for the hospital should take this into account. Members also heard that the nearby primary school would be closing and thought that a proposed health centre development of the site would provide a complex of health service facilities in one area.

A New Day Room

In June 1968, Miss M. L. Young, OBE, succeeded Group Captain Willan as Chairman of the House Committee.

The League of Friends, which had actively supported the hospital for many years raising several hundreds of pounds, was now planning to provide a day-room. The League's appeal was supported by a coffee morning, a Rotary Club Supper and Charity Ball, donations and other money-raising events.

In March 1969 the Minister of Housing and Local Government announced that he was prepared to support a scheme for the expansion of the Borough from 3,400 to 6,500 by 1981. The Committee noted that this had already been drawn to the attention of the Regional Board and it was agreed that the Management Committee should be asked not to delay work on extending out-patient facilities at the hospital.

In June, the Secretary reminded the House Committee members that in 1870 the Dowager Marchioness of Westminster had contributed £2,000 towards the cost of providing a Cottage Hospital for Shaftesbury. The foundation stone had been laid on 25th May 1871. The Committee agreed that arrangements for the celebration of the centenary should be considered.

The League of Friends Day Room Appeal continued to be well supported and it was announced in December 1969 that work on the building would start within the next month. The new room was brought into use on 22nd, May 1970 and was much appreciated by patients and staff. The League of Friends then decided that their next project should be to raise funds towards the provision of Geriatric accomodation at the Hospital, which would be of tremendous benefit.

The resignation of Miss M. L. Norman from her appointment as Matron was announced in September 1970 and she was thanked for her sterling work for the hospital and the community. Miss E. D. Dunton was appointed as Miss Norman's successor.

In December 1970 it was reported that work on upgrading and extending the out-patients' department was proceeding according to plan.

So, the Westminster Memorial Hospital, Shaftesbury, completes its century. Like all centenarians it has been buffeted by winds of change during its long life. It has not buckled under the strain, however, and still stands majestically on high ground commanding a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. It seems destined to do so for some years to come.

THE GROWTH OF THE HOSPITAL

