

The Great War 1914-18

Auxiliary Military Hospitals, Tattenhall

The Barbour Institute

From 1915, the Barbour Institute was transformed into an Auxiliary Military Hospital. This was part of the Red Cross/St John Hospital initiative in which Auxiliary Hospitals were established to deal with less seriously wounded servicemen of the Great War. Our village offered two such facilities during the conflict, namely the '**Village Hall, Tattenhall, and annexe, The Rookery, Tattenhall**'. In many cases, women in the local neighbourhood volunteered on a part-time basis and local medics volunteered their services too. The facility at the Barbour Institute was described as follows:

'Providing accommodation for 10 patients. The large hall is converted into a ward and the reading room is utilised for dining and recreation. The rooms on the upper floor being occupied by the nursing staff. The work is carried on upon an entirely voluntary basis and many ladies and gentlemen in the district have readily co-operated by their financial aid and personal services for the welfare of the patients. Under the superintendence of Mrs Edith Marguerite Wignall there is a staff of proficient nurses including Miss Janet Barbour and Miss Isabel Barbour. The doctors in attendance are Dr TB Brierley and Dr WH Wigham. Mr George Barbour lent four motor cars to convey the wounded men from Fazackerley military hospital.' (by kind permission of Bolesworth Estate)



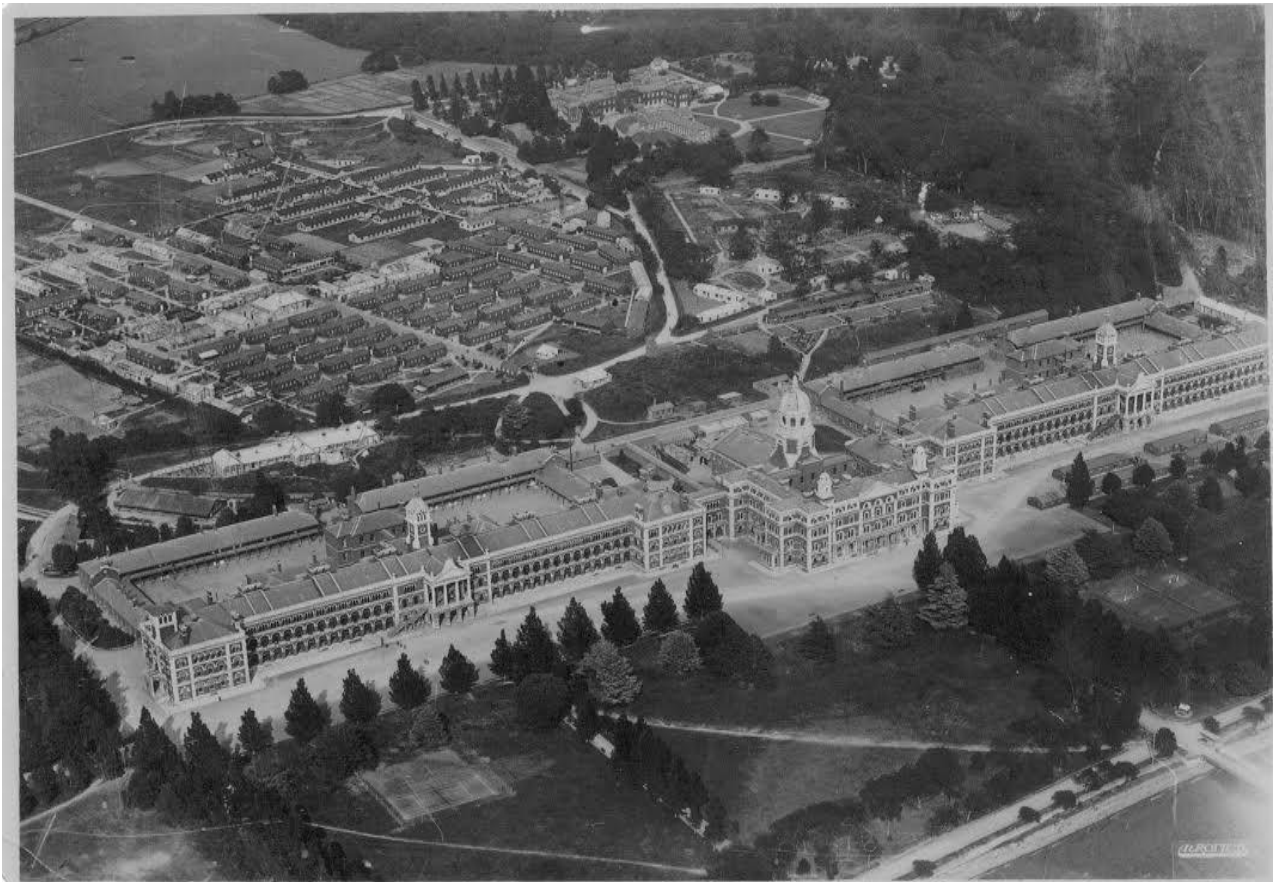
Interior photograph of Barbour Institute as a Military Hospital from 1915

Fred Arthur Manley

Ordinarily, patients were not convalesced back to their home area because it might impact negatively on recruitment. In the photograph of the interior of the Barbour Institute as an Auxiliary Military Hospital, however, is 'Local Lad' **Fred Arthur Manley** (he is sitting up in his bed second from the right). His 92 year old daughter 'Dot' i.e. Dorothy Butters is still a Tattenhall resident.

Fred Arthur Manley was born in the late 19th century in Burwardsley (son of William and Francis Manley). So oversubscribed was the Cheshire Regiment in their recruitment drive, that local lads found themselves being transported to Durham where they joined the 'Durham Light Infantry'. 'Dot' is not absolutely sure whether her father joined the Cheshire's and was then transferred to the Durham Light Infantry or whether he joined the latter from the start of the conflict.

That said, his injuries were severe ... ***'he had half his back blown away and we had to add pieces onto the bottom of his vest to keep it covered'***. Fred Arthur Manley, unusually, was convalesced home to Tattenhall (via Netley Hospital, a large military hospital used extensively during WWI). Soldiers were transported from France in Hospital Ambulance Troopships. On arrival at Southampton docks, they were taken by train to Netley Hospital.



Aerial view of Netley Hospital, near Southampton, where Fred Arthur Manley spent time convalescing before his return to Tattenhall

'Convalescent Blues'

The military authorities required all recovering soldiers to wear a standard uniform which became known as the **'Convalescent Blues'**. The uniform is shown in Frederick Cayley Robinson's painting **'Acts of Mercy – The Doctor 1'** below.



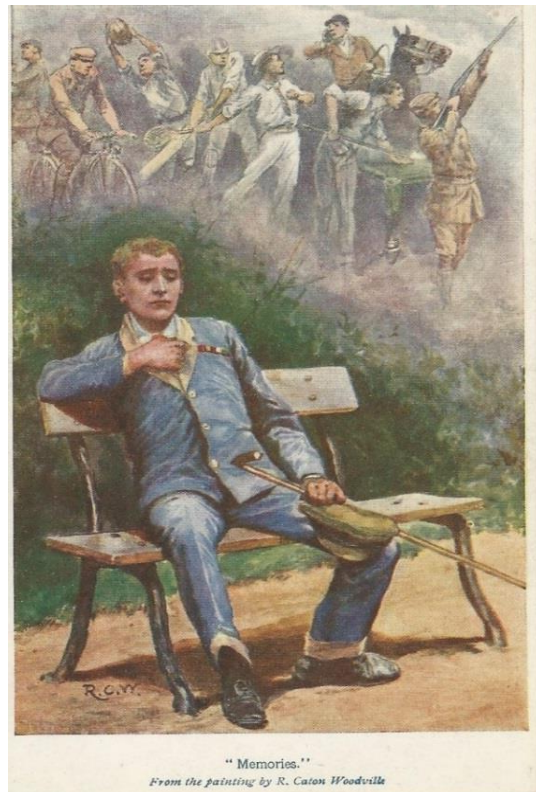
The uniform, made of a distinctive blue flannel and flannelette combination, resembled a pair of ill-fitting pyjamas. The uniform also included a red necktie. Only 'officers' were exempted from wearing this standardised uniform, the authorities providing those individuals with a white armband decorated with a red King's Crown. Differing combinations of the hospital-blue uniform and different coloured armlets distinguished the gravity of the illness. There was an expectation that the uniform would be worn both in hospital and in public – discipline was enforced.



Exterior photograph of the Barbour Institute complete with low sandstone wall, railings and planted shrubs. Staff and patients are posing on the steps. Interestingly, the patients are wearing **'Convalescent Blues'** which were compulsory.

Propaganda

Inclusion of the '**Convalescent Blues**' on a series of Great War patriotic postcards (examples of which are below) served as important propaganda for the military authorities. By featuring the 'wounded Tommy' on postcards, posters, lapel pins and during flag days, the authorities were able to emotionally engage the public with the gratitude owed to these convalescing individuals who had served both King and Country. The public, therefore, came to view the '**Convalescent Blues**' as heroes who had bravely served their country. However, there is evidence to suggest that the men themselves considered that the uniform imposed on them a level of subordination which challenged their masculinity. In other circumstances, the men wearing these ill-fitting uniforms were also a target of ridicule because their appearance fell short of the 'masculine' fashion of the day.



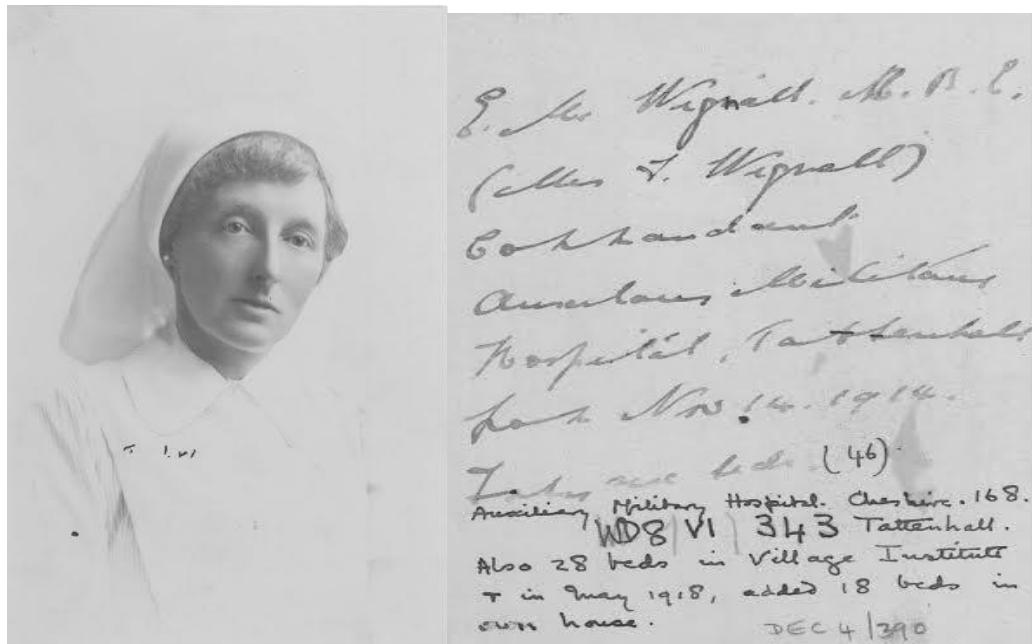
Great War propaganda postcards '**Pals**' (above left) and '**Memories**' (above right), in which convalescing soldiers can clearly be seen in their '**Convalescent Blues**'. The men are blinded in both instances.

Such postcards evoked sympathy and emotion.

For information, an organisation for blind servicemen, St Dunstan's, was founded in early 1915 when '**few people thought it possible that a blind person could lead a happy and useful life.**' Its founder Sir Arthur Pearson was himself blind. St Dunstan's became known as the 'House of Miracles'

The Rookery and Edith Marguerite Wignall

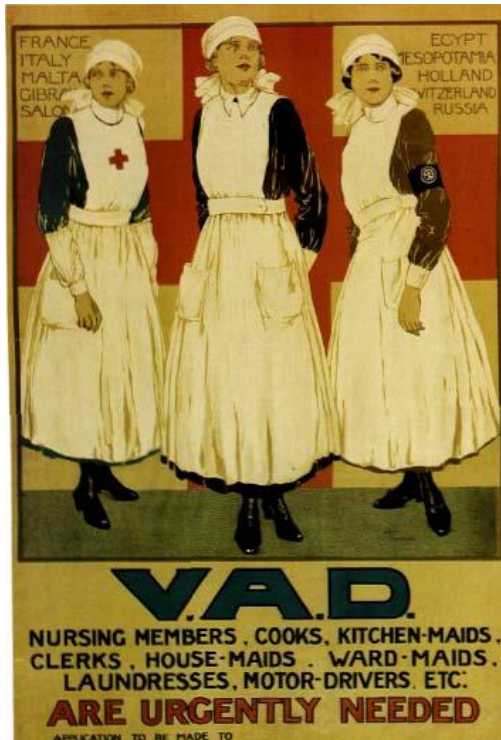
Tattenhall's second Auxiliary Military Hospital facility was located in the Annexe at 'The Rookery', the home of the Wignall family. Edith Marguerite Wignall was 'Commandant' of both Hospitals. She was awarded the MBE and she is listed in the London Gazette to this effect on 7 June 1918. The image of Edith Marguerite Wignall (below) is housed in the Imperial War Museum (IWM) **'Women's Work Collection'**. Women who received honours were invited by the IWM to submit a photograph and to make a note of their service on the rear.



The IWM Archive identifies the 'Auxiliary Military Hospital at Tattenhall', confirming '28 beds in the Village Institute' and 'in May 1918, added 18 beds in own house' (i.e. The Rookery – below)



VADs (Voluntary Aid Detachment)



Edith Marguerite Wignall as Commandant of Tattenhall's Auxiliary Military Hospitals, would have been assisted by a variety of other staff such as a Matron who would have directed the work of the nursing staff and a quartermaster who would have been responsible for the receipt, custody and issue of articles in the provision store.

Members of the local VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) who were trained in first aid and home nursing were also part of this vital service.

The iconic VAD poster of the Great War is to the left.

The image below shows former Tattenhall resident, Mrs Breen, as a VAD during the Great War. She is photographed (back row, 2nd from right) outside of the Barbour Institute, together with the Matron and men in their obligatory 'Convalescent Blues'.



This flyer was produced by Terri Hull & Yvonne Keeping for Tattenhall Local History Website (www.tattenhallhistory.co.uk)

We wish to thank the following in assisting us with this work:

- The British Red Cross (for the reproduction of the VAD poster)
- The Wellcome Library (for the reproduction of the Frederick Cayley Robinson painting)
- Bolesworth Estate for access to their archival records
- Julie Green who has provided invaluable information regarding Netley Hospital www.netley-military-cemetery.co.uk
- 'Dot' (Dorothy Butters) for sharing information about her father 'Fred Arthur Manley' who was convalesced to Netley Hospital and then The Barbour Institute Auxiliary Military Hospital in Tattenhall
- Lynn Holmes, a former Tattenhall resident (for the reproduction of 2 'Convalescent Blues' original postcards from her private collection)



