



203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment (Previously 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital)

The Welsh Medics ...

'From our perspective, we're a medical unit, we'll be taking some of the skills that we have learnt out in Afghanistan into the Welsh NHS, and that's a key issue for me as a commanding officer...'.¹



'Acquire hope all ye who enter here' (memories from a tour in Afghanistan, 2008)²

¹ Colonel Tina Donnelly, then Commanding Officer, on return from Op HERRICK 19B, 2014, quoted in: Big turnout for 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital homecoming parade in Risca ITV News, 1 March 2014
<http://www.itv.com/news/wales/2014-03-01/big-turnout-for-203-welsh-field-hospital-homecoming-parade-in-risca/>
(accessed 30 December 2014, last accessed 27 October 2024)

² Original painting presented to the unit by Captain RF O'Brien RAMC, Adjutant, November 2007 – August 2009

Introduction and Future Soldier re-organisation

Major changes occurred in the Army Medical Services from 28 February 2023 under the Future Soldier programme, with the formation of Multi-Role Medical Regiments (MMRs) and a reduction in the number of Close Support Regiments.³⁻⁴ Four Reserve field hospitals were merged, and nine MMRs were created in the Army Reserve.⁵ There are now two Regular and nine Reserve MMRs, in addition to four Regular Medical Regiments and three other Reserve units.⁶

203 (Welsh) Field Hospital, based in Cardiff, restructured during 2023 to form **203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment** (203 MMR), declaring full operational capability in January 2024. Also known as the Welsh Medics, it remains the main Army Reserve medical unit in Wales,⁷ dating its history back to the formation of the **3rd (Western) General Hospital** in Cardiff in 1914. Under the Future Soldier re-organisation, the previous Nursing, Clinical and Support Squadrons were reconfigured as 130 Hospital Squadron, 160 Hospital Squadron, 158 Medical Squadron (providing Role 1 medical support) and 3 Support Squadron, in addition to Regimental Headquarters, resulting in workforce expansion from 184 to around 300 personnel.⁸

The Regimental Headquarters and 3 Support Squadron are based in Cardiff (at the Army Reserve Centre, Gabalfa Avenue, Llandaff North).⁹ 130 Hospital Squadron is in Swansea (at the Army Reserve Centre, Morfa, previously the location for A Squadron);¹⁰ 158 Medical Squadron in Powys (at Cwrt-y-Gollen Training Camp, Crickhowell, previously the location for B Squadron);¹¹ and 160 Hospital Squadron in Denbighshire (at Kingsmill Road, Wrexham).¹² A detachment is at Llandudno (previously C Squadron)

³ Future Soldier (programme published 25 November 2021; British Army Website <https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/army-of-the-future/readiness/future-soldier/> (accessed 17 October 2024). Future Soldier Guide https://www.army.mod.uk/media/15057/adr010310-futuresoldierguide_30nov.pdf)

⁴ Following an announcement in Parliament on 15 October 2024, the three corps of the Army Medical Services (the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Royal Army Dental Corps and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps) amalgamated on 15 November 2024 to form the Royal Army Medical Service, the formation parade occurring in front of the Regimental HQ at Sandhurst. See: <https://www.army.mod.uk/news/the-royal-army-medical-service-created-to-ensure-british-army-healthcare-is-fit-for-the-future/> and <https://www.forcesnews.com/services/army/historic-creation-new-royal-army-medical-service-officially-marked-sandhurst> (accessed 16 November 2024)

⁵ The four Reserve Field Hospitals that merged were 201 with 212, and 207 with 208. The nine Reserve MMRs are numbered 202, 203, 206, 210, 214, 215, 243, 254 and 256 MMRs respectively. See separate histories.

⁶ See Current Units, on Friends of Millbank website <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/current-units>

⁷ The other is 144 Parachute Medical Squadron (of 16 Medical Regiment), also based in Cardiff.

⁸ Two of these Squadrons bear the lineage of 158 and 160 Field Ambulances, which amalgamated with 3rd (Western) General Hospital in 1967 to form 203 (Welsh) General Hospital RAMC (Volunteers).

⁹ Regimental Headquarters, and 3 Support Squadron <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/find-a-reserve-centre/wales/cardiff-gabalfa-avenue/> (accessed 27 October 2024)

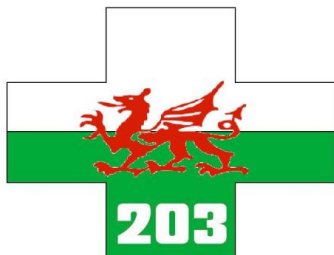
¹⁰ 203 Field Hospital. <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/army-medical-services/203-field-hospital/>; 130 Hospital Squadron <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/find-a-reserve-centre/wales/swansea-alamein-road/> (both accessed 27 October 2024)

¹¹ 158 Medical Squadron, 203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment. <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/find-a-reserve-centre/wales/powys-crickhowell/> (accessed 27 October 2024)

¹² 160 Hospital Squadron detachment, 203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment. <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/find-a-reserve-centre/wales/wrexham-kingsmill-road/> (accessed 27 October 2024)

Following the end of the Cold War, individual unit members have deployed as augmentees during the First Gulf War (Op GRANBY, when some 43 personnel deployed), to the Balkans (1990s), to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and on peacekeeping missions to Northern Ireland and Cyprus. The whole Unit (as 203 Field Hospital) deployed twice to Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 8A (in 2008) and Op HERRICK 19A (in 2013).¹³

Unit insignia



The current unit insignia is the same as that previously used by 203 Field Hospital. It shows a Welsh dragon superimposed on a cross, and was approved by the Army Dress Committee in February 2016 after a change to the unit emblem policy for AMS units.¹⁴⁻¹⁵ The MOD directed that the use of the Red Cross emblem by military medical units should be reserved for its primary protective purpose, necessitating its removal from unit insignia where it had previously been used as an indicative symbol. This change affected eight medical units.

Previous insignia



(Discontinued March 2015)

203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment – its history at a glance

- 1914 Founded as 3rd (Western) General Hospital
- 1914 – 1918 Served in Netley, Southampton with teams working in Flanders and Cardiff

¹³ Vassallo D. Organisation of the medical services in Iraq and Afghanistan. In: *Military Medicine in Iraq and Afghanistan – a comprehensive review* (Ed: Greaves; CRC Press, 2019), pp.53-54. Available online at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/op-telic-and-op-herrick/>

¹⁴ Change to Unit Emblem Policy for Army Medical Services Units, directive from Col A C Boreham, AMS Corps Colonel, 11 March 2015

¹⁵ Change to Unit Emblems – Army Dress Committee Approval, directive from AMS Corps Colonel, 18 February 2016

- 1919 Reduced to a section located at Dumfries Place, Cardiff
- 1938 Re-formed at Drill Hall, Fairwater, Cardiff
- 1939 (September) Hospital mobilised and deployed to Offronville near Dieppe
- 1940 Received, treated and evacuated casualties from the 'Battle for France'
Evacuated from Dunkirk
- 1941 – 1942 Alexandria, Egypt
- 1942 – 1944 Saida, Lebanon
- 1944 – 1945 Amiriya, Egypt
- 1945 Recovered to the UK following cessation of hostilities
- 1945 – 1948 Returned to Cardiff and Dumfries Place
- 1948 – 1967 Located at Norbury Road, Fairwater, Cardiff
- 1967 Moved to Llandaff North, and combined with elements of 158 and 160 Field Ambulances to form 203 (Welsh) General Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)
- 1995 Renamed 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital (Volunteers)
- 2008 Deployed to Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 8A
- 2009 Awarded the Freedom of the Town of Llandudno
- 2010 Awarded the Freedom of the County Borough of The Vale of Glamorgan
- 2013 Renamed 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital
- 2013 – 2014 Deployed to Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 19A
- 2014 Awarded the Freedom of the City of Cardiff
- 2015 Annual camp in Gibraltar
- 2016 Annual camp in California
- 2023 - 2024 Restructured to form 203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment.

The Welsh Medics – the unit's history in depth (1914 – 2024)

First World War

203 MMR's antecedent unit, the **3rd (Western) General Hospital**, known as 'The Welsh Hospital', mobilised on Whitchurch Common in September 1914. It then moved to Southampton where it set up as a tented hospital in No. 4 Camp, in the grounds of Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley (expanded to 2500 beds), for the duration of the war, receiving patients directly from troopships moored alongside the hospital Pier Head.¹⁶ It is believed that elements of the hospital also served in Flanders and in convalescent hospitals in Cardiff. The General Hospital was disbanded in 1919 but retained a section located in Dumfries Place, Cardiff.



Officers of the 3rd (Western) General Hospital, Cardiff

Second World War

In 1938 as part of the preparation for the coming war, the 3rd (Western) General Hospital was re-formed in the Drill Hall in Fairwater, Cardiff. On 2 September 1939 the hospital was mobilised. Two weeks later the unit sailed for Cherbourg and moved into a hospital site at Offronville near Dieppe.

¹⁶ For details of 'The Welsh Hospital' in WW1', see: The Past Lives and Times of The Royal Victoria Military Hospital, Netley 1862 – 1966. Chapter 2: The Hospitals at Netley 1914 – 1918 <https://www.netleyabbeymatters.co.uk/The-hospitals-at-Netley-1914-1918>. More information about Netley is on the Friends of Millbank website at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/med-school> (both accessed 23 July 2024).

The hospital received casualties from the Battle of France in 1940 before being evacuated from Dunkirk later that year. On 20 March 1941 the unit sailed for Alexandria where the hospital served until July 1942 when it moved to Saida in Lebanon. Finally in 1944 the hospital returned to Amiriya in Egypt serving there until the war ended in 1945.

Post-War

In 1948 the hospital moved to a new site in Norbury Road, Fairwater, Cardiff, under the command of Colonel Richard Bowen Rees.

Formation of 203 (Welsh) General Hospital RAMC (V)

Following the 1967 reorganisation of the TA, 158 and 160 Field Ambulances amalgamated with the 3rd (Western) General Hospital. The newly formed 800-bed unit was named the 203 (Welsh) General Hospital RAMC (V) and moved to its present location in the TA (now Army Reserve) Centre at Llandaff North, Cardiff, in the process acquiring its nickname, the Welsh Medics.



Op GRANBY (1990 – 1991, First Gulf War)



Detail, from Commemorative Op GRANBY print, Riyadh 1991 (artist: S Phillips, March 1994)

The Unit deployed some 43 individual augmentees on Op GRANBY, primarily to serve with 205 General Hospital in Riyadh.

Re-designation as 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital (Volunteers)

Following the end of the Cold War and Options for Change (1990), all remaining TA hospitals were downsized. In 1995 the unit was re-roled and renamed as 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital (Volunteers).

Op TELIC (Iraq, 2003)

The unit deployed a significant number of its personnel in support of other field hospitals

Naming of the Headquarter Building (2007)

The Headquarter Building in Gabalfa Avenue was officially named the Elizabeth Cadwaladr House on the 20 September 2007, in commemoration of Elizabeth 'Betsi' Cadwaladr, a Welsh nurse and a pioneer of military nursing during the Crimean War.

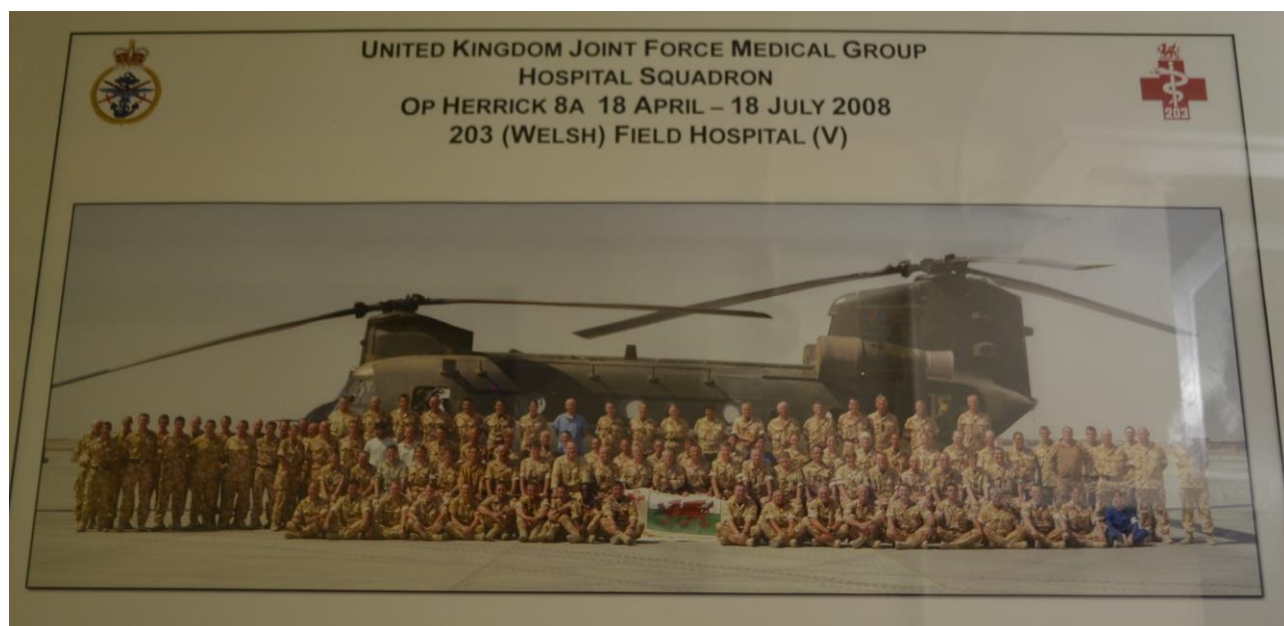


Plaque at entrance to Cadwaladr House

Op HERRICK 8A (Afghanistan, 2008)

203 (Welsh) Field Hospital deployed as a formed unit in the summer of 2008 on Operation HERRICK 8A, deploying 68 personnel to Camp Bastion. During this period they were filmed on location by ITV for a documentary series, Doctors and Nurses at War, with three one-hour long films, aired in February 2009.¹⁷

¹⁷ Doctors and Nurses at War http://www.qaranc.co.uk/doctors_and_nurses_at-war.php (accessed 25 January 2015, last accessed 27 October 2024)



Freedom of the City of Llandudno (2009)

In recognition of its efforts on Op HERRICK 8A in Afghanistan, the Unit was awarded the Freedom of the City of Llandudno on 19 September 2009.

Military and Civilian Health Partnership Awards (2009)

In recognition of its contributions towards Education and Training the unit was recognised by the Military and Civilian Health Partnership Award for 2009. It was also awarded the National Training Awards for delivery of NVQ training both on deployment and at home base locations, and for its assistance in delivery of Clinical Leadership and Humanitarian Relief programmes with the University of Glamorgan.

Freedom of the County Borough of The Vale of Glamorgan (2010)

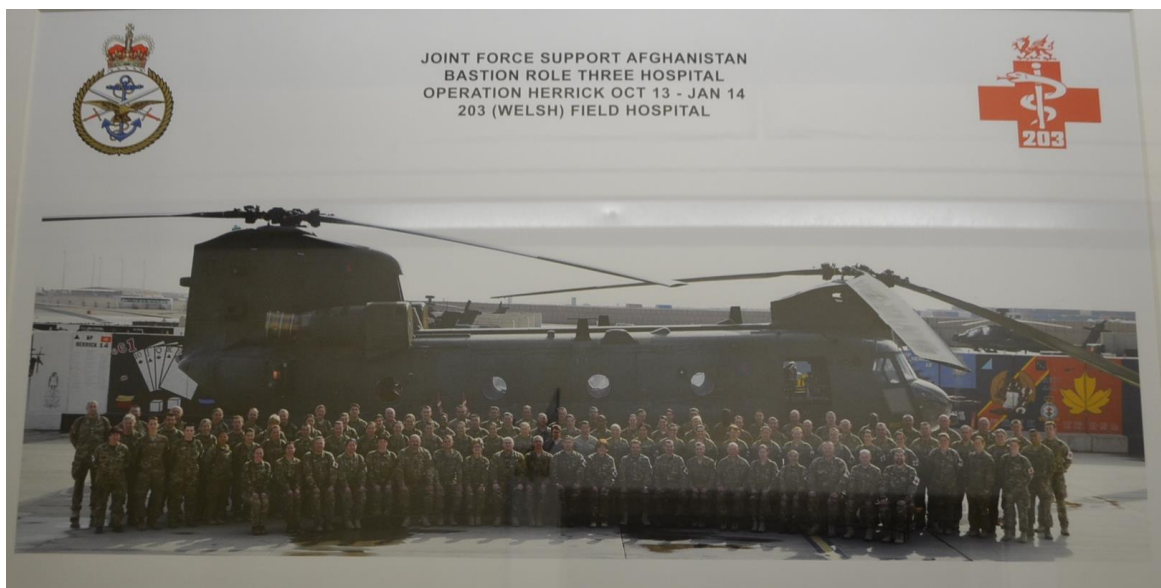
For many years of devoted service to the Sovereign and County, and in special appreciation and remembrance of all the men and women who serve or have served in the Unit, the unit was awarded the Freedom of the County Borough of The Vale of Glamorgan, on 17 April 2010.

Op HERRICK 19A (Afghanistan, 2013 – 2014)

The Unit returned to the Bastion Role Three Hospital on Op HERRICK 19A (October 2013 – January 2014). They were given a heroes' welcome at their homecoming parade through Risca on St David's Day, 2014.¹⁸

¹⁸ Big turnout for 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital homecoming parade in Risca ITV News, 1 March 2014

<http://www.itv.com/news/wales/2014-03-01/big-turnout-for-203-welsh-field-hospital-homecoming-parade-in-risca/>
(accessed 30 December 2014, last accessed 27 October 2024)



Freedom of the City of Cardiff (2014)



Following their return from Afghanistan, the unit was awarded the Freedom of the City of Cardiff on 21 April 2014, as a token of the honour and esteem in which the unit is held by the Council and citizens of the City and County of Cardiff, and in recognition of their services rendered to the Country and their colleagues in the Armed forces of the crown at home and overseas.

Subsequent developments (2014-2024)

Until recently 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital was one of 10 Army Reserve Field Hospitals with a capability to provide 200 beds when fully manned. The Army 2020 reforms, which took effect in 2015, resulted in the Unit re-rolling to a 50-bed capability as a standalone field hospital,¹⁹ or on combination with another unit forming a larger hospital of up to 400

beds (as a Force Support Hospital). The unit exercised this new role on Exercise Integrated Serpent in California in summer 2016, using American field hospital equipment, during annual camp.

The Future Soldier programme resulted in further unit restructuring, with the formation of **203 (Welsh) Multi-Role Medical Regiment** in January 2024. The new Unit's commanding officers, from October 2023, will be of Lieutenant Colonel rank (OF 4 grade) rather than full Colonel (OF 5) as previously.

¹⁹ Configured as 4-2-4-48 capability, i.e. four emergency bays, two operating theatres, four ITU beds and 48 ward beds



The Welsh Medics (original painting in RHQ, photographed with permission)



Unit crest, 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital, courtesy of Chris Richards

Command Appointment Boards, 1967 - 2023

203 (w) GENERAL HOSPITAL R.A.M.C (v)						
HONORARY COLONEL	COMMANDING OFFICER	MATRON	TRAINING MAJOR	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	QUARTERMASTER	REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR
Col. H.W. Wade, MC, CD. 1967-73	Col. J. Hughes, OHP, CD. 1967-73	Maj. M.D. Davies, CD. 1967-68	Maj. R. Foreman. 1965-68	Maj. P. O'Brien. 1967-68	Maj. L. Morion, CD. 1967-70	WO1. J. Barry. 1967-68
Col. B.B. Hickey, OHS, CD. 1973-75	Col. J. Stanton. 1973-76	Mt Col. E.A. Jones, CD. 1969-77	Maj. C. J. Bowen. 1964-66	Capt. E. Polter. 1968-71	Capt. A. Barrow, CD. 1970-73	WO1. J. Lomas. 1969-72
Col. J. Hughes, OHP, CD. 1975-83	Col. H.C. Thompson, MBE, CD. 1977-80	Mt Col. P. Gray, CD. 1977-80	Maj. L. Kane. 1966-68	Maj. W.H. Fuller. 1971-76	Capt. D. J. Charles. 1975-82	WO1. D. J. Charles. 1972-73
Maj. Gen. J.D.C. Graham. 83-86	Col. G. D. Shafford, CD. 1981-83	Mt Col. M. Nordin. 1980-80	Maj. K. D. Young. 1968-91	Maj. J. C. Roche. 1970-78	Capt. R. Morling. 1982-83	WO1. R. Morling. 1975-78
Col. W.G. Lyon, OSL, RCD, CD. 1988-92	Col. T. R. Austin, OHS, CD. 1984-87	Mt Col. R. Banks, ARRC. 1980-86	Maj. H. Stone. 1991-95	Maj. E. C. Hurston. 1978-78	Capt. F. D. Paterson. 1985-92	WO1. M. Hart. 1978-80
Col. T. R. Austin, OHS, CD. 1992-95	Col. G. W. Morris, CD. 1986-92	Mt Col. G. C. Royle. 1986-89	Maj. A. P. Henderson. 1997	Maj. L. Lloyd. 1978-80	Capt. D. J. Leek. 1990-95	WO1. A. Yarrington. 1980-81
	Col. C. J. Coun. L/RAMC 1992-93	Mt Col. B. Melvin, RRC, CD. 1989-94		Maj. B. K. Harper. 1980-83		WO1. S. Cunningham. 1981-82
	Col. G. D. Housam, CD. 1993-95	Mt Col. L. J. Jenkins. 1994-95		Maj. C. Price, MBE. 1983-89		WO1. J. Cork. 1985-85
				Maj. R. C. Parsons. 1989-95		WO1. J. A. Swales. 1985-87
						WO1. B. Comlin. 1987-89
						WO1. R. G. Harding. 1989-90
						WO1. C. J. Darrington. 1990-92
						WO1. S. J. Davies. 1992-93

Command Appointments 1967 – 1995

203 (Welsh) FIELD HOSPITAL (v)						
HONORARY COLONEL	COMMANDING OFFICER	SENIOR NURSING OFFICER	TRAINING MAJOR	REGIMENTAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	QUARTERMASTER	REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR
Col. T. R. Austin, OHS, CD. 1995-98	Col. G. D. Housam, CD. 1995-96	Mt Col. L. J. Jenkins, CD. 1995-97	Maj. A. P. Henderson. 1995-96	Maj. R. C. Parsons. 1995	Capt. D. J. Leek. 1995-02	WO1. C. J. Richards. 1995-97
Col. K.E. Thomas, J.P. 1998-06	Col. M. J. Maguire, CD. 1997-99	Mt Col. D. A. Jones, CD. 1998-00	Maj. S. R. Lawrence. 1997-98	Maj. M. J. Haslam. 1996-09	Maj. A.W. Cullen. 2002-06	WO1. J. Batcock. 1997-98
Col. L. J. George 2006-11	Col. M. C. French. 2000-04	Mt Col. V. Davies, CD. 2000-03	Maj. J. R. Johnson. 1998-00	Capt. A. J. Maxwell. 2003-08	Maj. L. P. Burns. 2006-	WO1. P. Hankings. 1998-00
Col. P. Carter 2011-	Col. P. J. Hubbard. 2004-08	Mt Col. K. Davies, RRC, CD. 2003-06	Maj. M. A. Ryan. 2000-02	Maj. A. J. Maxwell. 2008-		WO1. D. D. Henderson. 2000-02
	Col. K. Davies, RRC, CD. QHD 2008-11	Mt Col. G. D. Heal, CD. 2006-09	Maj. D. A. Wynn. 2003-05			WO1. A. J. Herrod. 2002-06
	Col. W. Donnelly CD DL 2011-14	Mt Col. W. Donnelly CD DL 2009-11	Maj. P. Reynolds. 2005-07			WO1. M. Davies. 2006-08
	Col. D. C. Smith 2014-	Mt Col. C. Whittaker RRC, CD 2011-14	Maj. R. Jolly. 2007-09			WO1. P. Stansfield. 2008-10
		Mt Col. M. J. Webb. 2014-16	Maj. R. Liddington. 2009-11			WO1. D. Roper. 2010-13
		Mt Col. M. Cadman, ARRC. 2016-	Maj. K. Hudson. 2011-13			WO1. S. G. Bowles. 2013-16
			Maj. S. J. Eversfield. 2013-15			WO1. A. D. Bache. 2016-
			Maj. K. E. McGuffie. 2015-			

Command Appointments 1995 – 2016 (see update below)

203 (Welsh) FIELD HOSPITAL						
HONORARY COLONEL	COMMANDING OFFICER	REGIMENTAL SECOND IN COMMAND	TRAINING MAJOR	REGIMENTAL QUARTERMASTER	REGIMENTAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR
2018 Col T MYHILL	2018 - 20 Col T J DAVIES MBE 2020 - Col S B LAWRENCE	2017 - 20 Lt Col S B LAWRENCE 2019 - 21 Lt Col R LIDDINGTON	2017 - 19 Maj F A MAGUIRE 2019 - 21 Maj K E MCGUFFIE 2021 Maj G E BOURNE	2006 Maj L P BURNS	2003 - 19 Maj A J MAXWELL 2019 - 21 Capt J T LEWIS 2021 Maj J T LEWIS	2016 - 2018 WO1 A D BACHE 2018 - 20 WO1 S C COOKE 2020 - WO1 M EVANS

Command Appointments 2016 – 2023, courtesy of Colonel Simon Lawrence L/RAMC

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following individuals in particular for their assistance with this unit history: Colonel Simon Lawrence L/RAMC (last Commanding Officer of 203 Field Hospital, 2020-2023), Colonel Tina Donnelly L/QARANC (Commanding Officer 2011-2014), Captain Huw Williams (Regimental Operations Support Officer, 2014), and Terry Hissey (Historical Branch Army).

This unit history is part of a series of histories of the current and previous units of the UK's Defence Medical Services; they can be downloaded from the Unit Histories section on the Friends of Millbank website: <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/current-units> and <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/previous-units/>.

The author apologises for any errors or omissions. If you notice any errors, or wish to contribute to this unit history, please contact the author at djvassallo@aol.com



Annual camp in Gibraltar, summer 2002 (original in RHQ)