



243 (Wessex) Multi-Role Medical Regiment

(Previously 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital; restructured as 243 MMR in December 2023)

Introduction

243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (Volunteers) was formed by the amalgamation of **211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)** and **219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)** on 1 January 1996, initially coming under the command of 43 (Wessex) Brigade and then 2 Medical Brigade. The unit dropped 'Volunteers' from its title in 2013 as a result of the Future Reserves 2020 plan, under which the Territorial Army was renamed as the Army Reserve.¹ Greater changes occurred under the Future Soldier programme, with a reduction in the number of Close Support Regiments and the formation of Multi-Role Medical Regiments, with 2 Medical Brigade being redesignated 2 Medical Group.² As a result, 243 Field Hospital restructured in December 2023 to form **243 (Wessex) Multi-Role Medical Regiment** (see new unit shield on p.41),³ with a Support Squadron, two Hospital Squadrons, and a Medical Squadron.

As 243 Field Hospital the unit had its Regimental Headquarters at Keynsham (near Bristol), with detachment locations: A at Keynsham & Gloucester, B at Exeter, C at Plymouth & Truro, and D at Portsmouth.⁴

As **243 MMR**, the unit is structured as follows: Headquarters, at Keynsham; 128 Support Squadron, at Keynsham and Gloucester; 219 Hospital Squadron, at Wyvern Barracks, Exeter; 211 Hospital Squadron, at Plymouth and Truro; and 129 Medical Squadron, at Portsmouth.

¹ The 'Future Reserves 2020' (FR2020) plan was outlined in Parliament by Defence Secretary Liam Fox on 18 July 2011. It was followed by the Army 2020 plan in July 2012, which announced a major restructuring of the British Army, and finally by a White Paper presented to Parliament by his successor, Philip Hammond, in July 2013: **Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued**. The latter confirmed that the TA would be renamed the Army Reserve.

² Future Soldier (programme published 25 November 2021; British Army Website <https://www.army.mod.uk/our-future/>. Future Soldier Guide https://www.army.mod.uk/media/15057/adr010310-futuresoldierguide_30nov.pdf)

³ The Implementation Order for the unit to re-titled as 243 Multi-Role Medical Regiment was confirmed in November 2022.

⁴ 243 Field Hospital (British Army Website <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/army-medical-services/243-field-hospital/>) (last accessed 30 August 2024)

Unit history at a glance

243 (Wessex) Multi-Role Medical Regiment (December 2023)					
211 and 219 Field Hospitals (Volunteers) amalgamated on 1 January 1996 to form 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V) with its HQ in Keynsham (Bristol). The Freedom of Entry to the City of Exeter was conferred on 26 February 2002 and received by the unit on 6 July 2002. The unit deployed twice on operations to Afghanistan, on Op HERRICK 7B (2008) and 17A (2012) as part of the UK Joint Forces Medical Group. 'Volunteers' dropped from title in 2013. Restructured as 243 (Wessex) Multi-Role Medical Regiment in December 2023, with locations as follows: Headquarters, at Keynsham; 128 Support Squadron, at Keynsham and Gloucester; 219 Hospital Squadron, at Wyvern Barracks, Exeter; 211 Hospital Squadron, at Plymouth and Truro; and 129 Medical Squadron, at Portsmouth.					
211 (Wessex) Field Hospital (Volunteers) (1 st April 1970) (Based in Plymouth)			219 (Wessex) Field Hospital (Volunteers) (1 April 1985) (Based in Bristol)		
Casualty clearing stations were renamed field hospitals and the unit's title became 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers). Expanded to 400 beds, 1 April 1985			The unit's mobilisation role was changed to support the British Army of the Rhine as a 400-bed hospital and its name changed to 219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers).		
211 (Wessex) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (Volunteers) (1 st April 1967)			219 (Wessex) General Hospital RAMC (Volunteers) (1 st April 1967)		
Formed through the amalgamation of the three units below. HQ based in Plymouth.			Formed through the amalgamation of the three units below. In 1969 the HQ moved from Bath to the Keynsham TA Centre (in Ashmead Road), near Bristol. Four years later the Bristol Detachment moved to join the HQ in Keynsham. The unit was granted the Freedom of Keynsham in 1982.		
128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA) Based at Exeter.	11 (Southern) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (TA) Based at Plymouth.	23 (Cornwall) Field Dressing Station RAMC (TA) Based at Truro.	19 (Southern) (City of Bath) General Hospital RAMC (TA)	129 (Bristol) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)	130 (Portsmouth) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)
The oldest of the three units. Raised as 24 th (1 st Wessex) Field Ambulance from the 1 st Wessex Bearer Company (est. 1902) on the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908. Saw service during the First World War (as 24 Field Ambulance) with 8 Division in France and Belgium and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Reformed as 128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA) in 1923. In the Second World War formed part of the Guards Armoured Division which landed in Europe on D Day; later involved in the drive to relieve Arnhem, and subsequently the invasion of Germany. Re-established in Exeter in 1947.	Raised in 1939 at Torquay and formed part of the British Expeditionary Force in North-West Europe, being one of the last medical units to be evacuated from Dunkirk. Later served in Lebanon and the invasion of Italy. Re-established in 1947, moved to Plymouth in 1949. Its predecessor was the 4 th (1 st Southern) Casualty Clearing Station, RAMC (TA), one of four CCS formed in 1939. This was renamed 11 CCS almost immediately.	Formed with the re-establishment of the Territorial Army in 1947. Initially named 23 (Southern) FDS when formed in Penzance in 1947; renamed 23 (Cornwall) FDS in 1949 and moved to Truro by 1955	Formed during the Second World War and served in the Middle East. Disbanded after the war and re-established in Bath in 1947.	Saw service with the 43rd Wessex Division during the invasion of Northern Europe in 1944/45. Disbanded after the war and re-established in Bristol in 1947.	Saw service with the 43rd Wessex Division during the invasion of Northern Europe in 1944/45. Disbanded after the war and re-established in Portsmouth in 1947.
1 st Wessex Field Ambulance (At Exeter) (WW1: as above)	2nd Wessex Field Ambulance (At Plymouth) (WW1: served as 25 Field Ambulance with 8 Division; disbanded 1919)	23 rd (Cornish) Field Ambulance (WW1: served with 7 Division)		3 rd (South Midland) Field Ambulance (At Bristol) (WW1: served with the 48th (Midland) Division)	3rd Wessex Field Ambulance (At Portsmouth) (WW1: served as 26 Field Ambulance with 8 Division; disbanded 1919)

Adapted from Table originally designed by Bob Laurence, Bristol Branch RAMC Association and provided to the author through Timothy Chambers in October 2020)

Members of the unit and its immediate predecessors have served as individual reinforcements on all major conflict operations since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1990, commencing with the first Gulf War (Op

GRANBY), Former Yugoslavia and Iraq (Op TELIC). 243 Field Hospital as a whole deployed to form the core of the hospital squadron in Camp Bastion Hospital, Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 7B and 17A as part of the UK Joint Forces Medical Group. Since then personnel have served on Op GRITROCK in Sierra Leone during the 2015 Ebola crisis, and the unit was involved with the military response to the coronavirus pandemic on Op RESCRIPT in the UK (2020 – 2022).

The unit insignia

The unit crest depicts the Wessex Wyvern, a mythical creature said to lurk in the West Country. It is clutching a flag with the unit designation and sits upon the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre decoration.

The Wessex Wyvern, as a Divisional Sign, was re-introduced in mid-1993 and 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) was the first unit to wear it on combat jackets. It was publicly worn first on 24 October 1993 at the 75th Anniversary commemorations of the award of the Croix de Guerre to the 24th Field Ambulance RAMC.⁵ 243 Field Hospital became its lineal successor.

This unit insignia (with a blue cross as background) was approved by the Army Dress Committee in 2019. This replaced an interim insignia (2015 – 2019) that had been introduced after a change to the unit emblem policy for Army Medical Services units.⁶⁻⁷ In 2015 the MOD had 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 been used as an indicative symbol. This change directly affected 243 Field Hospital.

Previous unit insignia



(Discontinued March 2015)



⁵ 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) – Unit Historical Record 1 April 1993 – 31 March 1994, Annexes C & G. The 75th Anniversary commemoration took place at St Amand-Les-Eaux on 24 October 1993, during the Unit's Annual Camp in Picardy, hosted by the French Military Authorities at their Camp National de Sissonne.

⁶ Change to Unit Emblem Policy for Army Medical Services Units, directive from Col A C Boreham, AMS Corps Colonel, 11 March 2015

⁷ Change to Unit Emblems – Army Dress Committee Approval, directive from AMS Corps Colonel, 18 February 2016



(Interim insignia, May 2015 – 2019)

Previous unit shield (discontinued March 2015)



*Previous unit shield, 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital
(courtesy of Captain George Harrill RAMC, Unit Archivist)*

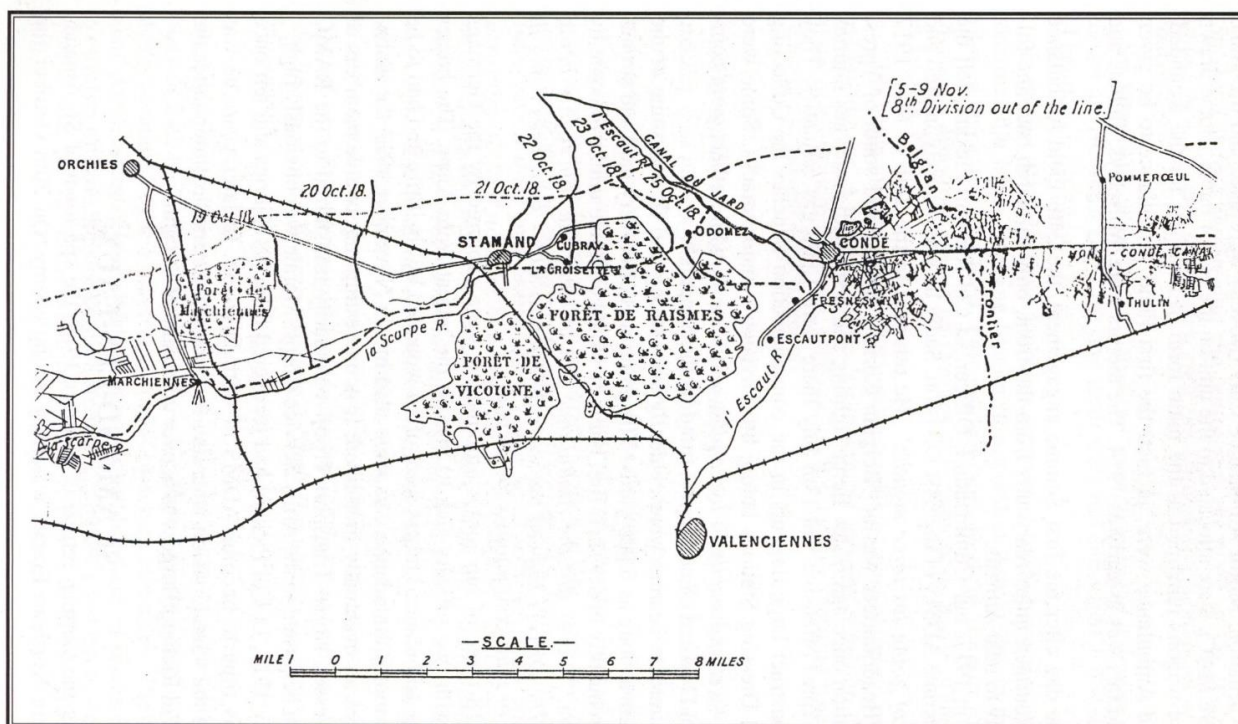
The Croix de Guerre

The Croix de Guerre, established by the French Government on 8 April 1915, is a gallantry award that commemorates acts of valour and Mentions in Despatches of individuals and units.

Although it is a comparatively common award within the French Armed Forces, it is rare for it to be bestowed upon British Army units. Only twelve such awards have ever been made, with just one to a medical unit, namely the **24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance**, 243's lineal predecessor: *'in commemoration of extraordinary devotion to duty in evacuating sick and wounded civilians from St Amand-Les-Eaux during violent enemy bombardment from 22 – 25 October 1918'*.

The German unit facing the British 8th Division at the time of the bombardment of St Amand-les-Eaux was the 26th Württemberg Reserve Division, forming part of the newly formed German 7th Army.⁸

The Croix de Guerre was awarded to the unit *'in recognition of the unit's work under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R Burgess, a Tiverton family doctor, in working day and night to look after 2,000 civilian wounded when the town of St Amand was heavily bombarded.'*⁹



Campaign Map of 1918 to show St. Amand. The line of British advance is shown to the north of the town. The Germans bombarded the town from the wooded area to the south.

⁸ Information obtained from a contemporary British intelligence map showing which German units (within the newly formed German 7th Army) were facing the British 8th Division. There is a description of the 1918 combat in a published unit history dating from 1935. (Information provided to the author on 21 January 2021 by Terry Hissey, Historical Branch (Army), from correspondence with André-Louis de la Bruyère, French historian)

⁹ Extract from article in *Exeter Express and Echo*, dated 24 Sep 1991, '128 + 211 = historic reunion', about the first reunion dinner between veterans of Exeter's old 128 Field Ambulance and members of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital (V), their successor unit. Copy held in Unit Historical Record: 1990-1991, viewed at Historical Branch (Army)

Only three units in today's British Army's Order of Battle (ORBAT) are still allowed to wear the Croix de Guerre ribbon distinction. They are: 5 (Gibraltar 1779-83) Battery, 19th Regiment, Royal Artillery (The Scottish Gunners); The Rifles (formed in 2007); and 243 MMR.¹⁰ Additionally, all units of The Rifles (formed in 2007), plus adults in the CCF and ACF badged detachments, wear same in ceremonial orders of dress.

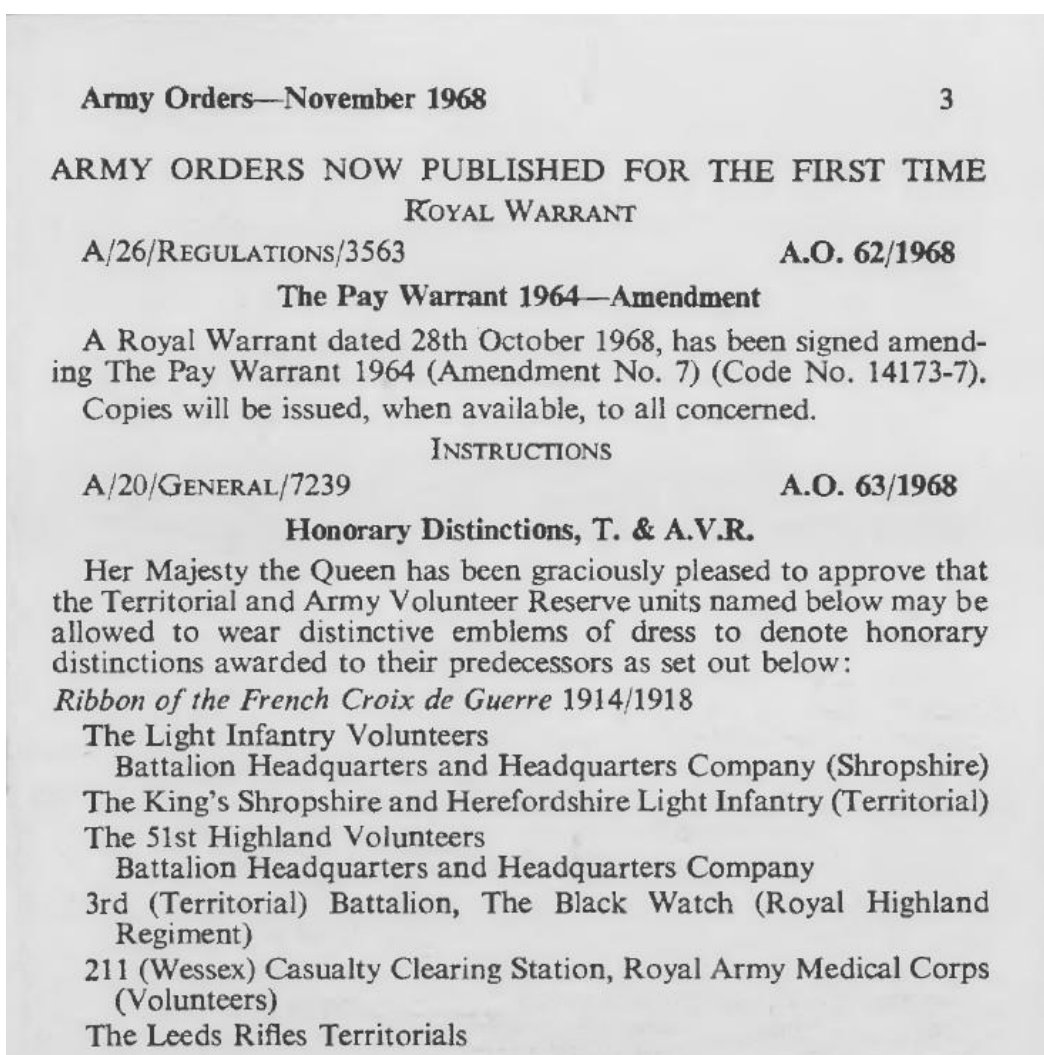
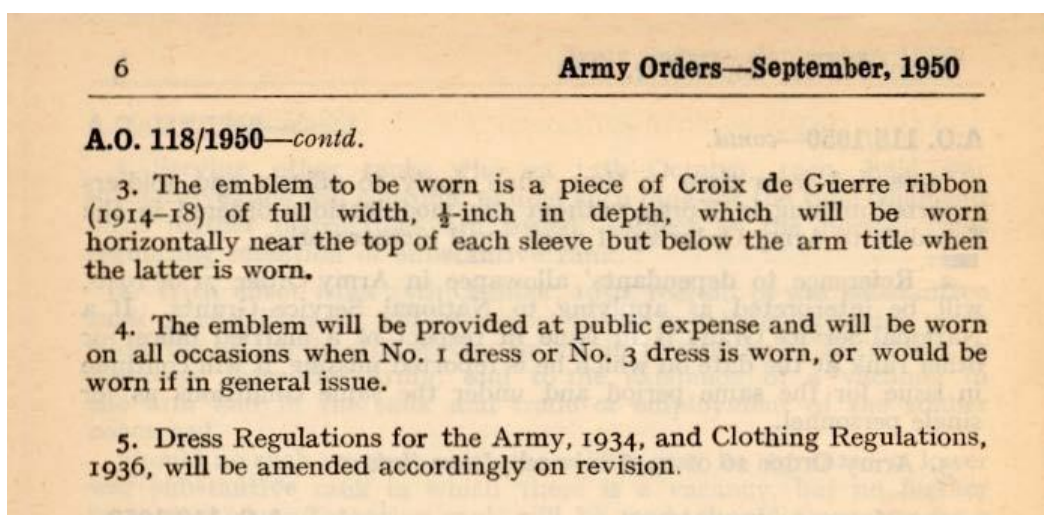


243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital has incorporated the Ribbon in its insignia since its formation on 1 January 1996, following approval by the Army Dress Committee for the wearing of the Ribbon on No.2 Service Dress (and Combat 95 uniform) on the left arm only as above (unlike The Rifles who wear it on both arms).¹¹ Combat 95 uniform was superseded in 2012 by Multi-Terrain Pattern (MTP) uniform. The Ribbon has not been authorised for use on MTP, and is therefore now only worn on Service Dress or ceremonial uniform.

20/MISCELLANEOUS/1752 Dress—Grant of Honorary Distinction.—1. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve the wearing of a distinctive emblem by personnel of the units shown in para. 2 which were cited in the Orders of the French Army during the 1914/18 war and awarded the Croix de Guerre. 2. <i>Designation when "cited"</i> 5th Battery, Royal Field Artillery. 6th Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) (Territorial Army). 24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps (Territorial Army).	A.O. 118/1950 <i>Present designation</i> 5th Field Battery Royal Artillery. 6th Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) (Territorial Army). 128th (Wessex) Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps (Territorial Army).
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¹⁰ Information provided by Historical Branch (Army), 29 July 2015

¹¹ Army Dress Committee meeting held on 14 December 1995, Decision 3767 (The National Archives: WO 32/22009 Historical Branch (Army), 2016)



Army Orders (1950 and 1968) granting approval to unit personnel to wear the Croix de Guerre

It is the comparative rarity of this collective award to British Army units that brings pride to all who receive it, and to those who carry on the traditions of that unit.



*L'Evacuation - painting of action at St Amand-les-Eaux by Captain George Harrill, 2018
(reproduced with permission)¹²*

¹² Bristol Centenary Art George Harrill Bristol <https://www.facebook.com/georgeharrillart/>



Citation for Croix de Guerre (Held at 243 Field Hospital, Officers' Mess, Keynsham)
(photograph courtesy of Captain George Harrill)

The Citation (transcribed by Captain George Harrill) reads as follows:

CITATION – The British 24th Field Ambulance

‘From the 22nd to the 25th October 1918, in a town fiercely bombarded by the enemy, the entire staff of the above medical unit, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R Burgess, with incomparable devotion, went out, day and night, to the rescue of wounded civilians in various parts of the town, dressed their wounds and ministered to their wants before sending them behind the lines. Under dangerous conditions, operated on urgent cases and achieved the evacuation of 2,000 wounded, sick or disabled, after having administered first aid.’

The citation was contained in General Order No. 11.724 “D” of 19th November 1918 under the hand of Marshal Petain, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army. The Croix de Guerre was pinned to the unit flag at a ceremony in Engheim, Belgium on 29 January 1919 by General Jean Desgoutte, commanding the Fifth French Army, accompanied by General Sir Richard Butler commanding III Corps. The Award later led to a visit to the unit by King George V.¹³



The Croix de Guerre pinned to the original unit flag, then in possession of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital, on display at a formal event in 1969 (photograph held in unit archives)

Of note, this photograph shows WW1 veteran Mr Reginald Woodgate, one of the original 24th Field Ambulance members (far right). He is wearing the Military Medal gallantry award, 1914 (‘Mons’) Star with clasp, War Medal and Victory Medal.¹⁴

¹³ Macmillan A. The RAMC and the Croix de Guerre. In: RAMC Reunited Newsletter September 2018.pp.2-6 http://ramcreunited.co.uk/files/RAMC-REUNITED-NEWSLETTER-46---September-2018_j5oa3xk8.pdf (accessed 21 January 2021)

¹⁴ Medals identified by Captain George Harrill

VICTORY

Fifth Army, the boxing and Rugby football competitions, and the 8th Battalion Machine Gun Corps furnished the "runner-up" team in the Fifth Army association football competition for individual units. Indeed, the division very nearly swept the board; for the 8th Battalion Machine Gun Corps team was only beaten in a replay after the first game had been drawn.

Early in the New Year, on the 29th January 1919, there took place in the grounds of the Château d'Enghien another ceremonial parade at which Général Desgoutte, commanding the Fifth French Army, accompanied by General Sir R. H. K. Butler, commanding the III Corps, presented the Croix de Guerre and Gilt Star to the 24th Field Ambulance* and the following French decorations to officers and other ranks of the division:—

Lieut.-Colonel R. Burgess, D.S.O., M.C., 24th Field Ambulance, Croix de Guerre and Gilt Star.
 Capt. E. H. Smythe, M.C., G.S.O. III 8th Division, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.
 Capt. W. E. Stevens, M.C., Adj. 1/ Worcestershire, Croix de Guerre and Gold Star.
 Lieut. W. Leslie-Carter, 490 Field Company R.E. (T.F.), Croix de Guerre and Palm.
 Sergt. W. Millis, 5th Battery, R.F.A., Croix de Guerre and Gold Star.
 Gnr. R. Sowerbutts, 5th Battery, R.F.A., Croix de Guerre and Palm.
 Actg.-Sergt. R. Clarke, 2nd Field Company, R.E., Croix de Guerre and Palm.
 Sergt. J. A. Berry, M.M.P. 8th Division, Croix de Guerre and Bronze Star.

Two battalions of the 25th Infantry Brigade furnished the Guard of Honour, under command of Brig.-General Hon. R. Brand, D.S.O., and the 25th Field Ambulance was also on parade.

On the 15th March 1919 General Heneker left the division, on appointment to the command of the Southern Division in the Army of the Rhine. What he thought of the division he had

* The following translation of Marshal Petain's Order of the Day explains the circumstances in which this honour was won:

"From the 22nd to the 25th of October 1918, in a town (St. Amand-les-Eaux) violently bombarded by the enemy, all ranks of this Field Ambulance under the command of Lieut.-Colonel R. Burgess continued with unsurpassed devotion by day and by night to seek for wounded civilians in all parts of the town, to dress their wounds and administer to their comfort, and then send them back to safety. Under conditions of great difficulty they performed immediate operations in urgent cases, and in the course of their work of mercy successfully evacuated about 2,000 wounded, sick, or disabled persons, after having attended to their immediate needs.

"GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, 19 Nov. 1918."

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GENERAL HENEKER'S FAREWELL

so long and ably commanded and of the quality of the troops of which it was composed can best be given in his own words: MARCH 1919

"I have been in command of the division for nearly two years and during that time the division has passed through many vicissitudes.

"Soon after assuming command, we carried out a very successful attack at Bouchavesnes just North of the Somme, and had the good fortune to follow it up and to take part in the inspiring advance of some 25 miles which ended in front of the Hindenburg Line East of Gouzeaucourt and Gonnelleu. Then being moved North into Second Army, we remained in Reserve during the successful operations which resulted in the capture of Messines and Wytschaete.

"Moving North again into Fifth Army, we took part in the heavy fighting of July and August about Hooze and Westhoek, where the division earned not only the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief, but also a personal visit from him.

"A short time was spent in the Ploegsteert area, and then we moved up to Ypres where we, on and off through the winter of 1917/1918, held the Passchendaele Salient.

"Pulled out for training during the month of March 1918, we were suddenly rushed South and thrown into the retreat from the Somme where the division covered itself with glory. Withdrawn to re-fit, we were sent to the Aisne for a rest, and came in for the punishing retreat on that front, where we lost very heavily. Between the 21st March and 15th June our casualties amounted to just over 17,500 all ranks.

"Finally we were fortunate in helping to push back the Germans during the operations which closed on the 11th November.

"During all this time, in offence as well as in defence, I have watched with admiration the wonderful spirit which pervaded all ranks. Neither the winter wind of the Passchendaele Salient nor the sleepless days and nights of the retreats on the Somme and the Aisne appeared able to destroy the cheerfulness, or diminish the marvellous devotion to duty which was displayed by officers and men.

"I have come out of the war with one conviction at all events, and this is that the finest man on God's earth is the British Private Soldier."

* * * * *

The long course had been run and won. If, as they waited their turn to leave the western theatre of war, any of the men of the 8th Division fought over again in mess-room or canteen the battles in which they had taken part, it must have seemed to many of them that their division had had all the worst of the

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Details of Croix de Guerre presentation to 24th Field Ambulance on 29 January 1919

(source: *The Eighth Division in War 1914–1918*, John Boraston & Cyril Bax, The Medici Society Ltd 1926)

Laying-up of the Banner of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V), 1995

A copy of the Laying-up Service is preserved in the last annual Unit Historical Record for 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital (V), for 1994-1995.¹⁵ The text boxes below are taken from this Service.

The Award of the Croix de Guerre to 24 (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC

It was the tradition for the French general awarding the Croix de Guerre to pin the medal to the colours of the receiving unit, but since medical units do not have colours something suitable had to be contrived. Private Lionel E Parminter, a tailor from Exmouth, sewed two sheets back-to-back and sewed a red cotton cross onto the resulting Banner. A local Belgian girl from the village of Engheim embroidered the 8th Division emblem onto it.

The Banner was presented in 1922 to the Mayor of Exeter and hung in the Guildhall for many years. With the imminent amalgamation of 211 and 219 Field Hospitals [on 1 January 1996], and in view of the fact that the new RHQ would be located in Bristol [sic], it was decided that the Banner should remain in Devon, the most suitable place being Exeter Cathedral.

Lt Col Burgess formally presented the Croix de Guerre to the Mayor of Exeter on 2 May 1922, at the same time as the Banner. The decoration has been loaned back to the unit from the Town Hall whenever required for formal occasions, in the meanwhile remaining in safe keeping at Exeter Guildhall.¹⁶

The Banner was laid up in Exeter Cathedral on Remembrance Sunday, 12 November 1995, after being presented to the Canon in Residence by the Commanding Officer, Colonel John Riddington Young, in a formal ceremony.

The Laying-up of the Banner of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V), Exeter Cathedral, Remembrance Sunday 12 November 1995

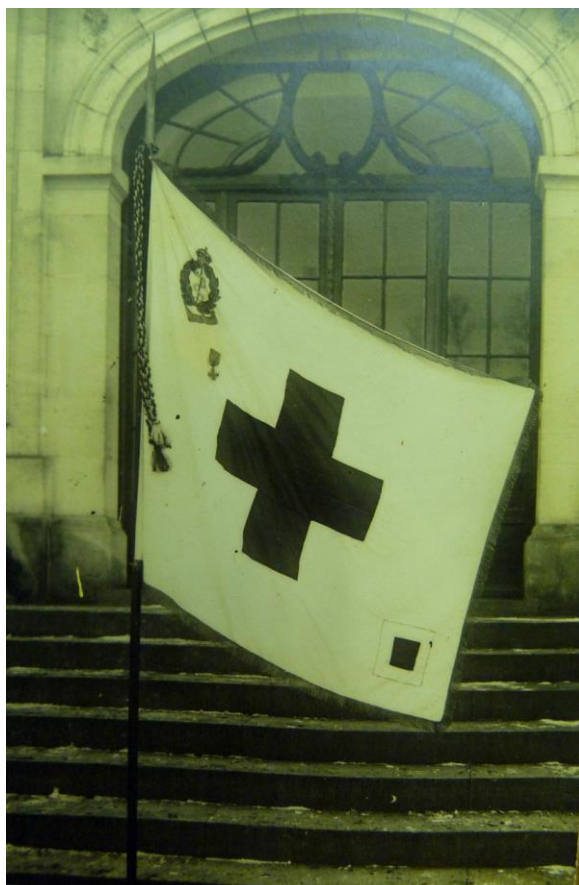
'This Banner formerly held by 211 Field Hospital, Royal Army Medical Corps, I now deliver into your hands for safe custody within these walls.' (Commanding Officer, 211 Field Hosp, to Canon in Residence)

'I receive this Banner for safe custody within this Cathedral' (Canon in Residence, in reply)

The current whereabouts of the Banner are unknown, and it is said to have been buried within the grounds of Bristol Cathedral.¹⁷ A replica was produced in 2015 and is held by 243 Field Hospital (see photograph below).

¹⁵ 'Format for the Laying-up of the Banner of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V), Remembrance Sunday 12 November 1995.' (1994-95 Unit Historical Record, Annex H1 dated 15 January 1995) (copy provided by Historical Branch (Army), 23 July 2015)

¹⁶ Confirmed by WO1 (RSM) J Lang, personal communication, 2015, and by Captain George Harrill, January 2021



Croix de Guerre pinned to original unit banner; divisional sign at bottom right (unit archives)



Replica of original banner, produced 2015

¹⁷ Information from WO1 (RSM) J Lang, personal communication, 21 July 2015



*Croix de Guerre display at RHQ. The flag is a small-scale replica of that onto which the Croix de Guerre was pinned when the award was made to the unit in 1919, and the decoration is also a copy.
(Photograph by Captain George Harrill, supplied through Terry Hissey)*

A First World War History

A detailed history of 24 (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC during the First World War has been published by Captain George Harrill, Permanent Staff Administrative Officer (PSAO) of 243 MMR, and Unit Archivist.¹⁸ It mentions other West Country Territorial Force predecessors of the unit such as the 2nd/1st Wessex Field Ambulance, the 25th and 26th Wessex Field Ambulances (which all served alongside the 24th Field Ambulance with the 8th Division); 3rd South Midland Field Ambulance from Bristol (served with the 48th (Midland) Division); and 23rd (Cornish) Field Ambulance (which served with the 7th Division). It also gives details of four Wessex Hospital Units: 2nd Southern General Hospital from Bristol, 4th Southern General Hospital from Plymouth, 5th Southern General Hospital from Portsmouth, and the Bath War Hospital.



¹⁸ George Harrill. *243 Field Hospital A First World War History - Tracing the story of the 24th Field Ambulance and other Wessex medical units in the First World War* (published privately, 2024)

The RAMC 24th (WESSEX) Field Ambulance 1914 War Memorial at Exeter Cathedral



(Photograph by Richard Brine)

'On a dark wall at the back of Exeter Cathedral hangs an even darker memorial dedicated to the memory of west-country men who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps. These were the volunteers who went into battle armed only with a medical kit or a stretcher, men who carried injured comrades for miles across open battle grounds, sometimes on their backs, ducking shrapnel and shot and always, always risking their own lives; forbidden by the Geneva convention to use weapons except in self-defence.

*In spite of some attributions to other Battalions or Regiments, all men named on this Memorial were actually serving with the 24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance at the time of their death.'*¹⁹

Details of each individual on this Memorial are listed on the website of Devon Heritage. The individual circumstances and battles under which many of these RAMC personnel lost their lives are recounted in Captain Harrill's recently published history, referred to above.

¹⁹ Devon Heritage

<http://devonheritage.org/Places/DevonCounty/TheRAMC24thWessexFieldAmbulanceMemorial.htm> (accessed 27 January 2021)

A Second World War History

A detailed history of the predecessors of 243 (Wessex) Field Hospital during the Second World War was published by Captain George Harrill simultaneously with his publication of a First World War History.²⁰

Its chapters separately describe the activities of the following units, at different times of the war, as well as Honours and Awards, the Fallen, and the aftermath of war:

144 (South Midland) Field Ambulance, in France, 1939-1940

11 (South) Casualty Clearing Station, in France, 1939-1940

13 Casualty Clearing Station, in France, 1939-1940

Home Service Duties, 1940-1943

11 Casualty Clearing Station, in Syria and Italy, 1940-1944

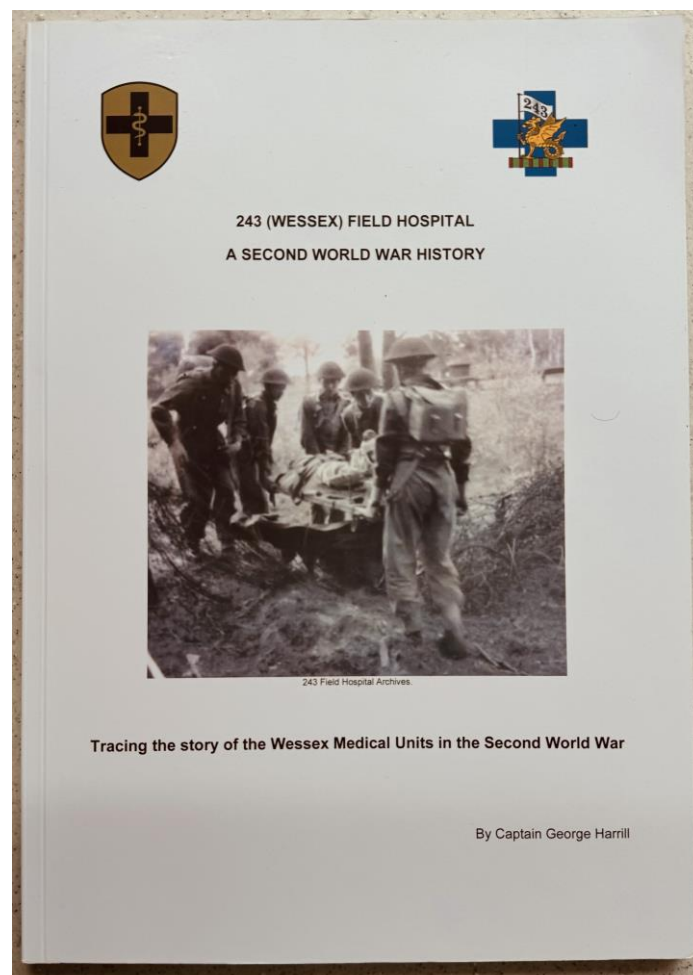
19 Casualty Clearing Station, in Tunisia and Italy, 1942-1946

128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance, 1939-1944, and then 1944-1945

129 (Wessex) Field Ambulance, 1939-1944, and then 1944-1945

130 (Wessex) Field Ambulance, 1939-1944, and then 1944-1945

23 Casualty Clearing Station, in Northern Europe, 1944-1945.



²⁰ George Harrill. *243 (Wessex) Field Hospital A Second World War History - Tracing the story of the Wessex Medical Units in the Second World War* (published privately, 2024)

1996 - Formation of 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V)

On 1 January 1996, 211 and 219 Field Hospitals RAMC (V) were amalgamated to form 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V), under command of 43 (Wessex) Brigade. On 1 July 1999, the Oxford Detachment was transferred to 202 (Midlands) Field Hospital (V) and re-designated as its D Squadron. In April 2001, the unit came under command of Headquarters Medical Group based in York (which changed its name on 1 August 2002 to HQ 2nd Medical Brigade).

2002 - Freedom of the City of Exeter

On 6 July 2002 the unit formally received the Freedom of Entry to the City of Exeter.²¹ This Freedom was exercised during a Homecoming Parade in April 2013 on return from its second deployment to Afghanistan.



Scroll Photograph by Captain Ali Simmons

²¹ The actual resolution to confer this honour was passed in an Extraordinary Meeting of Exeter City Council on 26 February 2002 (Council minutes). The formal scroll marks the date of presentation to the unit, 6 July 2002.

2018 – Centenary commemorations at St Amand-les-Eaux

1918 – 2018 St Amand Croix de Guerre Centenary

At the invitation of the Mayor of St Amand Les Eaux & the Headmaster of the Institute Notre Dame des Anges, 243 Fd Hosp deployed to Northern France from 19 – 21 October 2018, to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the events of October 1918 and the award of the Croix de Guerre to 24th Wessex Fd Ambulance. The occasion involved a re-enactment in period uniforms of an Advanced Dressing Station on the actual 1918 site at the Notre Dame school, to which the towns people were invited to see both a 1918 ADS & a 2018 equivalent. This was followed by the unveiling of a memorial stone in the foyer of the school. Wreaths were laid at the graves of British & French fatalities in the town cemetery and memorial services were held in the town and at the school. The weekend culminated with a centenary parade through the town, involving VIP dignitaries, the St Amand band, local French army personnel, French & British veterans, local youth organisations, and people from St Amand and the surrounding area. 243 Fd Hosp was given the honour of leading the parade which finished at the St Amand memorial garden, where a memorial stone was dedicated to the unit. The final event was the honorary knighthood of Col Taylor into the honourable order of the 'Chevalieres de la Tour' of St Amand.

Detail on commemorative board in RHQ celebrating 2018 Centenary visit to St Amand-les-Eaux

243 Field Hospital deployed to St Amand-les-Eaux for the weekend of 19-21 October 2018 at the invitation of the town's Mayor and the Headmaster of the Institute of Notre Dame des Anges (the school on rue de Braille where 24 (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance had set up their aid post), to celebrate the centenary of this unit being awarded the Croix de Guerre. The school now has a commemorative wall plaque inside the main foyer (pictured below).²² The unit carried out a re-enactment of a WW1 aid post on the actual site, made all the more realistic by the use of WW1 canvas bell tents and the inclusion of a WW1 Model T Ford ambulance driven over from England. The local townspeople were invited to the school to enjoy the occasion. A new memorial was also dedicated in the Town's Memorial Garden.



Centenary visit to St Amand-les-Eaux, October 2018

²² Funded by donations from the public <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/24thfa19182018croixdeguerre>



Left to right: General Maxime Crevillier (senior military representative of Saint Amand-les-Eaux), Monsieur Alain Bocquet (Mayor) and Colonel Alistair Taylor L/RAMC (Commanding Officer 243 Field Hospital)



*New memorial at the town's Memorial Garden
(photograph kindly provided by Colonel Peter Baines L\RIFLES)*

Commemorative film

In August 2020, following the centenary visit to St Amand-les-Eaux, Captain George Harrill produced a commemorative film about 24 (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC during the First World War. The film (narrated by 'Sergeant Harrill' in First World War uniform in front of a Regimental Aid Post) is available on YouTube as a whole and as a set of eight videos.²³ It sets the scene with a look at the RAMC, the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, uniforms and equipment, and the outbreak of war. It then describes the unit's mobilisation, its deployment into France, its participation in the Battle of the Somme (1916), and in the Third Battle of Ypres (1917), followed by the unit's role in the battles of 1918 and at St Amand-le-Eaux, and caring for Spanish 'Flu victims before returning to UK in mid-1919. It ends with the centenary visit and recognition of the ongoing commitment of reservists to their country and others.



Title and Screenshots from commemorative film



Oil painting of *L'Evacuation*, and its artist Captain George Harrill (in the role of narrator)

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqld6mrz0zLk1lzIOEUJKnOPxGx0dVMaa> (accessed 21 January 2021)

243 Field Hospital's Deployments

Op HERRICK 7B (January – April 2008)

The unit deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan for the latter half of Op HERRICK 7 to form the core of the Hospital Squadron at Camp Bastion Hospital, supplemented by individuals from other units. The chief capability development during 243's tenure was the move of Camp Bastion Hospital from its original tented (Tier 1) facility into purpose-built Tier 2 accommodation at the beginning of February 2008. 243 Field Hospital had been in Theatre for just over two weeks when the move was achieved.²⁴⁻²⁵



*9 February 2008: The new Camp Bastion Hospital, first occupied by 243 Field Hospital
(Copyright Defence Image Library)*

Op HERRICK 7 saw a massive surge in the Taliban's use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).²⁶ All the British deaths on this tour were due to IEDs or accidents, and 243 Field Hospital's workload revolved around the resuscitation of IED victims. It was at this new Tier 2 hospital, during 243's tenure on HERRICK 7B, that the life-saving process of 'Right Turn Resuscitation' was introduced at Bastion.²⁷ This was the process by which critically injured casualties were received by the trauma team within the operating theatre rather than in the emergency department. The term has become synonymous with the aggressive and successful damage control resuscitation policy adopted at Bastion and has been adopted worldwide.

²⁴ Report on the transition of the Role 2 Enhanced Medical Treatment Facility, Camp Bastion from Tier 1 to Tier 2 Accommodation. Annex F, within: Op HERRICK 7 Post-Operational Report (5 General Support Medical Regiment - POR Lessons Report UK Joint Force Medical Group Op HERRICK 7, dated April 2008)

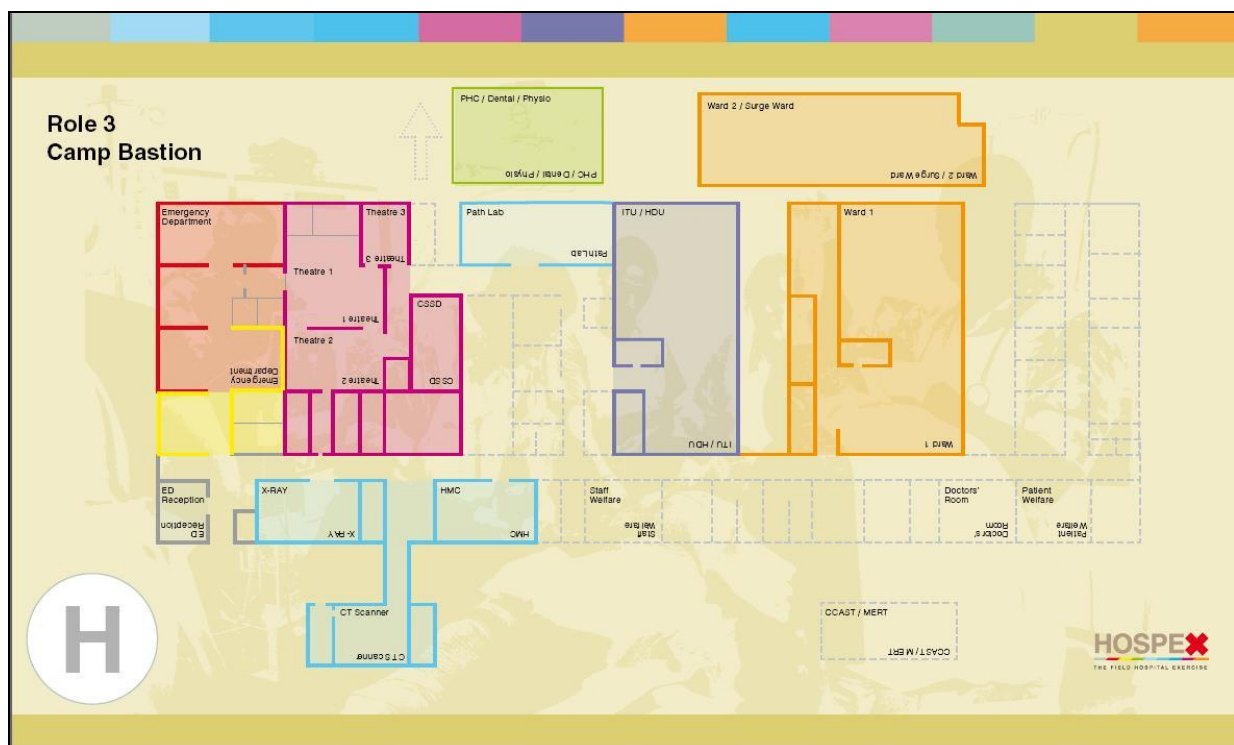
²⁵ Vassallo D. A short history of Camp Bastion Hospital: the two hospitals and unit deployments *J R Army Med Corps* 2015; 161: 79–83. (<https://militaryhealth.bmj.com/content/161/1/79>)

²⁶ Vassallo D. A brief history of Operations Telic and Herrick. In *Military Medicine in Iraq and Afghanistan – a comprehensive review* (Ed: Ian Greaves; CRC Press, 2019), p.27. Available online at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/op-telic-and-op-herrick/>

²⁷ Tai NRM, Russell R. Right Turn Resuscitation: Frequently Asked Questions. *J R Army Med Corps* 2011; 157(3 Suppl 1): pp. S310-S314.



*Arrival of patients at the new Camp Bastion Hospital, Op HERRICK 7B
(Oil painting by David Rowlands, commissioned for Officers Mess 243 Field Hospital, Keynsham)*

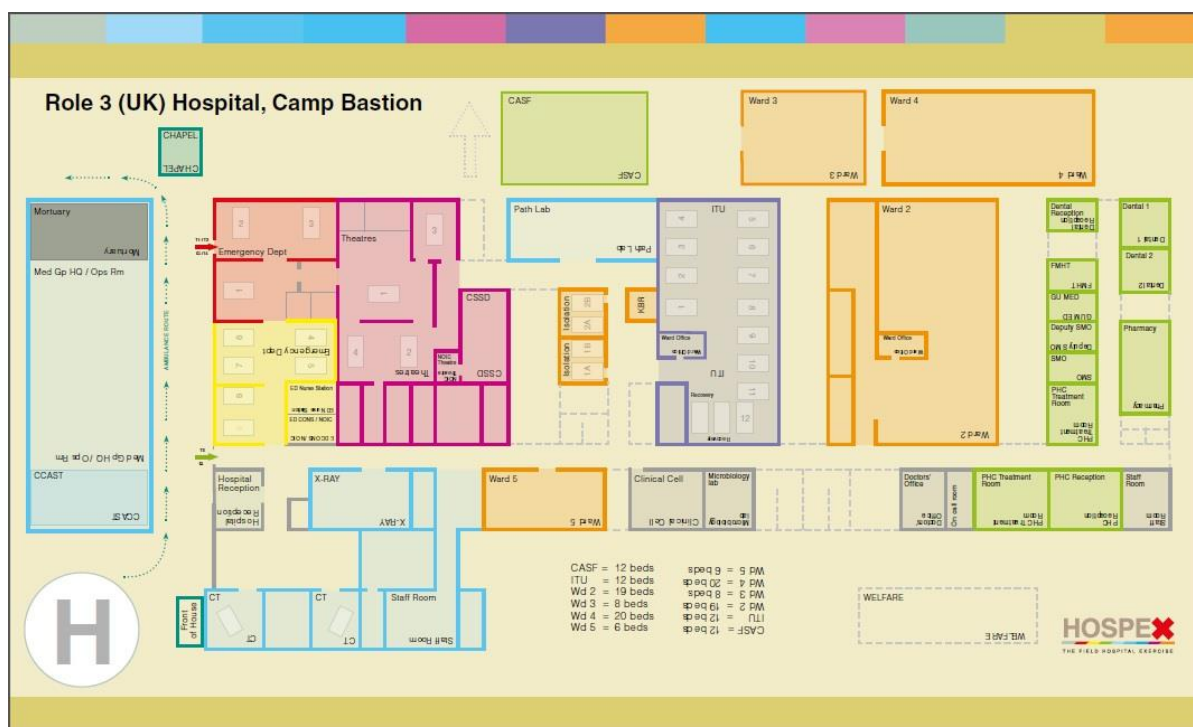


The new Role 3 Camp Bastion Hospital, with single CT scanner, before expansion (Hospex Tabletop Training Aid, March 2009, developed by the author). The entrance to the Emergency Department (ED, marked in yellow and red) is bottom left, shielded by a canopy (see photo and painting above). Patients requiring Right Turn Resuscitation would enter ED and turn right directly into the Operating Theatre (marked in purple).

Op HERRICK 17A (October 2012 – January 2013)

Following an 18-month period of intensive pre-deployment training 243 Field Hospital returned to Helmand Province and Camp Bastion Hospital for a second time on Op HERRICK 17A. Its command team led the Role 3 component of the UK Joint Force Medical Group. The Unit was able to mobilize 49 individuals, the remainder of the staff being provided by Individual Reinforcements from all three services, both regular and reserve. Additionally the Role 3 deployed with 80 members of the 14th US Combat Support Hospital (14 CSH). The UK deaths during these months were caused by “green-on-blue” attacks by renegade Afghan Army soldiers, an increasingly worrying development in the later stages of the HERRICK campaign, while most of the other British casualties were from small arms fire or improvised explosive devices.²⁸

The major challenge now taxing medical planners was the absence of an indigenous Afghan National Army hospital in Helmand Province. Most major trauma casualties from the Afghan Forces, both battle-related and from motor vehicle incidents, had to be admitted to Bastion and accounted for the majority of inpatients on this tour. This had led to the development of a trauma treatment training centre at the adjacent Afghan Army Troop Medical Centre at Camp Shorabak, where staff from 243 and 14 CSH continued the mentoring of local medical staff instituted by their predecessors on Op HERRICK 16.²⁹



Layout of the Role 3 (UK) Camp Bastion Hospital following expansion, with two CT scanners (bottom left); Critically ill patients (Category A or T1) would now enter directly into the ED Resuscitation Room (red arrow) and if necessary, proceed to the Operating Theatre. The term ‘Right Turn Resuscitation’ remained in use. (Hospex Tabletop, playboard for Op HERRICK 17, developed by the author with Army Graphics, Andover).

²⁸ Post Operational Report. Role 3 Hospital, UK Joint Force Medical Group, Op Herrick 17A (February 2013)

²⁹ Vassallo D. Organisation of the medical services in Iraq and Afghanistan. In: *Military Medicine in Iraq and Afghanistan – a comprehensive review* (Op cit), p.75. Available online at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/op-telic-and-op-herrick/>

The unit's predecessors

The unit's main forebears are the **24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance**, formed in 1908; **211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)**, formed in 1970, which carries the lineage from **24th Field Ambulance**); **219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)**, formed in 1985; and **243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V)**, formed in 1996. The most senior of eleven forebears is the **1st Wessex Bearer Company**, formed in 1902.

24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance

This unit was originally the **1st Wessex Bearer Company**, formed in Exeter in 1902 by Lt Col Ransom Pickard (later awarded CB CMG TD). Bearer Companies were formed during the Edwardian 'Volunteer Period' before the First World War in Brigade camps and were the amalgamation of Regimental Stretcher squads. The 1st Wessex Bearer Company was a volunteer unit with two elements to it – a small detachment at Teignmouth under Captain Mariette, and the HQ at Exeter under the command of Lt Col Pickard. The Bearer Company was renamed as the **24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance** with the formation of the Territorial Force on 1 April 1908.³⁰ The unit was mobilised and attached to the 8th Division, landing in France in November 1914, where it was renamed as **24th Field Ambulance** for the duration of the war. After returning from France in mid-1919 it was temporarily disbanded. On 1 October 1921 the Territorial Force was renamed the Territorial Army so the unit was reformed in 1923 and renamed **128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)**. The unit in its different guises forms part of the lineage of **211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)**.



(On left): Cigarette card from 1939 (provided by Terry Hissey); (far right): 1914 service tunic with its medic qualification badge and the unique Wessex brass shoulder badge (George Harrill collection)

³⁰ Information obtained from comprehensive 19-page booklet by Col John Riddington Young, Commanding Officer: '**211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers) and the Croix de Guerre**' (Publication date uncertain; copy held in Museum of Military Medicine, Brigadier Jones Archive)

211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers), (1970 – 1996)

This unit was formed at Plymouth as **211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)** by the re-designation of **211 (Wessex) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (Volunteers)** on 1 March 1970. On this date all casualty clearing stations were renamed as field hospitals, and all field dressing stations converted to field ambulances.³¹ **211 (Wx) CCS** had been formed at Plymouth just three years previously, on the amalgamation of three units,³² when the Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve came into being in 1967.

211 (Wessex) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (V)

- **128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)** based at Exeter. The oldest of the three units, it was formed in 1923 from the **24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance (TF)**. In the First World War it was attached to the 8th Division and renamed as 24th Field Ambulance. It landed in France in November 1914, saw service on the Western Front and was awarded the Croix de Guerre (see above). In the Second World War 128 Field Ambulance was attached to the Guards Armoured Division which landed in Europe on D-Day. It was involved in the drive to relieve Arnhem, and subsequently the invasion of Germany.³³ The unit was reformed at Exeter in the re-established Territorial Army in 1947.
- **11 (Southern) Casualty Clearing Station RAMC (TA)** based at Plymouth. Its predecessors were the **2nd Wessex Field Ambulance (TF)** formed in 1908, disbanded 1919; and the **4th (1st Southern) Casualty Clearing Station (TF)** formed in Truro in early 1939. The latter was renamed later that year as **11 Casualty Clearing Station**.³⁴ It went to war with the British Expeditionary Force in Northern Europe, and was one of the last medical units to be evacuated from Dunkirk. Later it served in the Lebanon and participated in the invasion of Italy. It was reformed in 1947 in the TA and moved to Plymouth in 1949. The present-day detachment there of 243 MMR is both a lineal and a geographical successor.
- **23 (Cornwall) Field Dressing Station RAMC (TA)**, formed at Penzance as **23 (Southern) Field Dressing Station** with a detachment at Truro with the re-establishment of the TA in 1947. It changed its name to 23 (Cornwall) FDS in 1949, and the HQ moved to Truro by 1955.³⁵ Its name commemorates a WW1 unit.

³¹ General Staff Order: Authority for Redesignation, MOD(AMD 1) Encl 5 to 20/Med/1097(ASD 2) dated 23 February 1970. This authorised that all Casualty Clearing Stations be re-designated as Field Hospitals

³² General Staff Order (GSO) - Authority: B to A/20/Misc/5164(ASD5c) dated 9 March 1967: '211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers): Forming as a new unit at Plymouth wef 1 April 1967' (Museum of Military Medicine, Army Staff Duties (ASD) Cards, TA/AER/V: ASD - RAMC (1), Box 619)

³³ The 128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance: an account of the actions of the Field Ambulance under command of the Guards Armoured Division in the British Liberation Army from June 1944 to May 1945, by Lieutenant Colonel J.M. Scott. RAMC Archives (RAMC/789), Wellcome Library <https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b19269985#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0> (accessed 21 January 2021)

³⁴ All TA Casualty Clearing Stations disappeared in 1927 as a savings measure. Four were reformed in 1939 just before war broke out. The fourth of these was the 4th (1st Southern) CCS. Later that same year it was renumbered 11 Southern CCS and went to war. (Brigadier (retd) Alistair Macmillan, personal communication 24 January 2021)

³⁵ Brigadier Macmillan, personal communication 24 January 2021

Further history - 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)

In 1985, **211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)** was re-roled from a 200-bed role to a 400-bed role in support of the British Army of the Rhine.³⁶ In October 1993, the unit's annual camp was held in Picardy, France and a ceremonial parade, led by the AMS (V) Band, was held at St Amand-Les-Eaux to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the bestowal of the Croix de Guerre. This included the ceremony of 'Trooping the Croix de Guerre'.³⁷

This unit ceased to exist on 1 January 1996, when it amalgamated with 219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) to form **243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V)**.

Past and present members of 211, 219 and 243 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) now have a private Facebook page to commemorate their history.³⁸



211 (Wx) CCS hospital exercise in the 1970s. Note Series 2 Land Rover Battlefield Ambulance, marquee tentage, woollen pullovers and DMS booting with gaiters (unit archives)



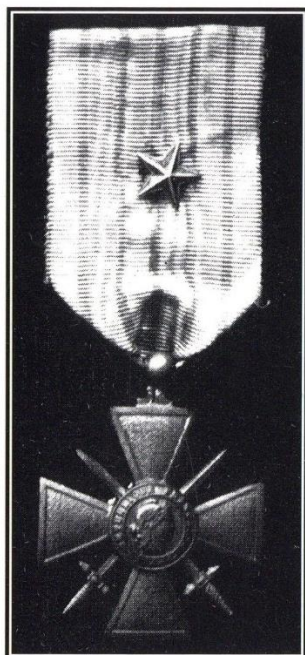
211 (Wx) Fd Hosp Exercise Pegasus team in the early 1990s (unit archives)

³⁶ GSO: D/SG(Ops) 468/2/24/3 (ASD 3a) dated 13 Mar 1985: 'Authority is given for the re-organisation of 211 Field Hospital RAMC (V) and 212 Field Hospital RAMC (V) from a 200 bed to a 400 bed role.' Effective date 1 April 1985

³⁷ Annex C to 1993-94 Unit Historical Record, 2 April 1994

³⁸ 211/219/243 Wessex Field Hospital <https://www.facebook.com/groups/442372725801405/> (last accessed 8 February 2021)

Unit history of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers) by Colonel Riddington Young



211
(Wessex)
Field Hospital
Royal Army Medical Corps (Volunteers)
and the
Croix de Guerre

by

Colonel John Riddington Young
T.D., M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.S., D.L.O., L/R.A.M.C.(V)
Commanding Officer

Front cover of unit history³⁹

(See selected extracts below, including Commanding Officers 1914 – 1916))

³⁹ Provided to the author by Terry Hissey, Historical Branch (Army)

211 & The CROIX DE GUERRE

The Croix de Guerre is a French gallantry award which was established in the Great War on 8th April, 1915 by the French Government to commemorate acts of valour and Mentions in Despatches both to individuals and units.

Although it is a comparatively common award to the French Armed Forces, it is rare for the award to be bestowed upon British Army units; only twelve such awards ever having been made and of these only one to a unit of the Royal Army Medical Corps. It is the comparative rarity of the collective award to units of the British Army which is the source of pride to the select few who received it. That unique honour is enjoyed by our predecessor unit 24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance.

24th (1st WESSEX) FIELD AMBULANCE

This unit was originally the 1st Wessex Bearer Company which was formed in 1902 by Lt Col Ransom Pickard, CB, CMG, TD. Bearer Companies were formed during the "Volunteer Period" before the first World War in Brigade camps, and were the amalgamation of Regimental Stretcher squads. The 1st Wessex Bearer Coy was a permanent volunteer unit with two detachments - one small detachment at Plymouth under Captain Mariette, and the other (HQ) half at Exeter under the command of Lt Col Pickard, their CO.

In 1908 the War Minister, Mr (later Lord) Haldane, formed three Field Ambulances for the Wessex Division: the 1st Wessex Bearer Company then became the 1st Wessex Field Ambulance and remained under the command of Lt Col Pickard; the Plymouth detachment became an autonomous unit, the 2nd Wessex Field Ambulance under the command of Lt Col Soltan; and the 3rd Wessex was based in Portsmouth under the command of Lt Col Brooke.

At the outbreak of World War I, the three field ambulances were mobilised on 4th August 1914, and went to Salisbury Plain where they formed the 8th Division. An interesting extract from Sergeant Major A. E. R. House's diary tells us how they ten got to France.

At the annual camp, FARGO Camp, Salisbury Plain.

August 4th, 1914. (War declared). Quickly struck all tents and returned them to Ordnance. All transport on the Plain was at once commandeered by the Army and we were unable to shift such Mess requisites as casks of beer, a piano, etc. which were left quite naked on the Plain. Our men were allowed to fill their water bottles with beer and then we turned on the taps and let the remainder run away; this was an extraordinary action from the point of view of some of the onlookers.

This day we returned to our Headquarters at Exeter.

The next morning August 5th we received our Mobilisation

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papers and took up our duties at the Drill Hall, Exeter, where we remained until August 13th. During this time some of us were working fifteen hours a day.

Everyone seemed to want to enlist, and they were quickly sworn in, and then sworn at. There seemed to be no end to issuing things and as they had nowhere to put them, there was a good excuse for losing them.

August 13th Entrained for War station Lark Hill, Salisbury Plain arriving Tidworth 7pm and marched to Bulford Sling.

August 24th Marched 13 miles from PERHAM DOWN and rejoin remainder of Unit.

Sept 13th Lord Kitchener inspected the Unit.

Sept 28th Inspected by HM The King, Queen Mary, and Princess Mary.

Aug 25th - Oct 10th Received from Exeter Depot a great number of recruits and had to knock the raw product into shape. Oct 10th having a large surplus of men, the best were selected for overseas and on Oct 11th those surplus to establishment were sent to Dawlish, from there we drew reinforcements to replace casualties.

Oct 11th Moved to HURSLEY PARK near Winchester to join 8th Division.

Nov 5th Marched to Southampton Docks to board s/s CYMRIC for Le Havre.

The Unit was unique in going overseas without a Regular Officer, NCO, or man - all being Territorials.

The Cymric left at 6pm full to the brim with infantry and artillery 'The Navy never sleeps' - One of the ship's kitchens were allocated for our rations, and for our cooks to guard and sleep in; when the cooks awoke in the morning they had lost their boots and all the tea ration and we bought tea from the ship's cook at 6d a mug and did not dare suggest it was our tea. Probably ours was reserved for the next boat load going over.

Interestingly the Cymric was torpedoed the following day by the German submarine U20 and sank the day after!

The 1st and 2nd Ambulance units reached La Havre on 5th November and by 11th November 1914 were at the front line at La Gorgue, a suburb of Estaire, where they were billeted in a school. Trench foot is a dangerous condition resulting from having the feet immersed in cold water. It can lead to gangrene and amputation and was common in trench warfare. In one day, in December 1914, the 24th (the unit's new number for the duration of the war) Field Ambulance treated 275 cases of Trench Foot in La Gorgue.

During the Great War the 24th was praised for its hard work and valour. In March of 1915 at the bloody battle of Neuve Chapelle, the unit supported the 24th Infantry Brigade and during the five days of the conflict, the 24th Field Ambulance collected more casualties "than any other of the Field Ambulances in action". The History of the 8th Division tells us of the carnage where 75 Officers and 1,600 other ranks were killed or wounded in action:

"Dead and Wounded lay everywhere on sodden ground".

3

The 24th (1/Wx) Field Ambulance was Mentioned in Despatches as a unit: "Splendid indeed throughout the battle was the work of the Wessex Field Ambulance. It earned and deserved the special commendation of General Pinney".

In May 1915, when the 8th Division "straightened out a dent in our line" known as 'Hudson's Bay', the unit dealt with and evacuated 1,100 soldiers in 24 hours.

In Spring 1916, the Field Ambulance moved to the Somme area where they constructed a Main Dressing Station in a wood at Asnaucourt in the line in front of the town of Albert. Our predecessors were in support of the 8th Division's disastrous assault on Ovillers at the notorious Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916.

This battle included some of the most appalling casualty figures in the long and bloody war. A German soldier's eye-witness account of the 8th Division's attack helps explain the tragic outcome on that terrible morning when 20,000 men were killed and 40,000 injured.

The intense bombardment was realised... to be the prelude to an infantry assault. The men in the dug-outs therefore waiting ready, ... At 7.30am the hurricane of shells ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Our men at once clambered up the steep shafts leading from the dugouts ... The machine-guns were... hurriedly placed in position ... a series of extended lines of infantry were seen moving forward from the British trenches. The front line appeared to continue without end to right and left. It was quickly followed by a second line, then a third and fourth. They came on at a steady easy pace as if expecting to find nothing alive in our front trenches. "Get ready!" was passed along our front. A few moments later, when the leading British line was within a hundred yards the rattle of machine-gun fire broke out along the whole line. Red rockets sped up into the blue sky as a signal to our artillery, and immediately afterwards a mass of shells from the German batteries ... burst among the advancing lines. Whole sections seemed to fall ... The advance rapidly crumpled under this hail of shells and bullets. All along the line men could be seen throwing up their arms and collapsing, never to move again.

This completely inundated the medical support. An extract from the War Diary of 24th Field Ambulance tells how the Main Dressing Station was completely swamped by the massive numbers of severe casualties. The wounded could not be adequately evacuated rearwards and hundreds of severe cases had to be taken off stretchers and put on straw and palliasses and left to sleep in the open so that the stretchers could be used to retrieve others from the field of battle.

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For evacuation, Motor Ambulance Cars (MACs) were used and the grand total of five MACs were allocated to the unit on the eve of battle. Horse drawn ambulance wagons remained as the main form of transport for the wounded. 24th Field Ambulance were, in fact, the first Field Ambulance to be given MACs and this was as early as 1914. The motors were Wolseleys, Talbots and Daimlers.

On the day after the first Somme engagement, the 24th Field Ambulance marched fourteen miles rearwards from the front, only to march back the following day to near Amiens.

Early in 1917, our Commanding Officer, Lt Col Ransom Pickard, left the 24th to become ADMS of the 61st Division. Sadly he was severely injured and "put out of going for three months". He returned to the 24th in May 1917 when its Headquarters was at "Belgian Corner" behind and south of Ypres. This situation once again saw fierce fighting and dealt with many gas injuries from the Ypres offensive. On 13th July there were 1,800 gas casualties. They had to construct large dugouts in the communication trenches for Collecting Posts and Dressing Stations before 8th Division's major attacks. Some were evidently "wet and smelly lit by candles and lamps", while others were comfortable and boasted electric lights fitted by the Sappers!

The stretcher bearers were evidently very strong and fit and some of the carries were as long as 6,000 yards! The going was often very hard and strenuous and frequently under shell fire, but they would continue until overcome by exhaustion. "Never did the Ambulance fail to clear the line before being relieved. The Drivers showed the same devotion to duty - sometimes being at the wheel or reins continuously for 24 hours"!

In 1918 three of our motor ambulances were captured by the Germans together with two officers and 30 men in the retreat from Aisne. The horses pulling the ambulance limbers were often wounded by shell fire and had to be shot. The motor ambulance cars were also hit. In November 1917 the ambulances were all eventually motorized; it is interesting that twelve members of the 1st Wessex Horse Transport Troop voluntarily transferred to the RAMC rather than be posted to the Army Service Corps! Morale was obviously high.

In July 1917, Lt Col Pickard had recovered from his injuries and left once again, this time to become ADMS of 48th Division. In later years he was ADMS of the 43rd Division where he reorganized the medical units after the War. Lt. Col Richard Burgess took over command of the unit.

St. AMAND-LES-EAUX

During the German retreat of October 1918, the spa town of St. Amand-les-Eaux in Northern France was held by the enemy. On 20th October the

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25th Bde Intelligence Officer, Lt Willison, MC, found the town to be full of refugees. They had evidently been driven in front of the Germans for 15 miles and then "dumped" in the town. "The sick, wounded and helpless were left behind, put into cellars and told to remain there whilst the town was being bombarded." It was estimated that some 2,000 French refugees were holed up in the cellars of the town. The Germans retreated to the forest south east of the town. Lt Willison relates, "Our guns followed our normal custom, had avoided firing on the town; but half an hour after our patrols had entered, the enemy shelled the place heavily, using gas shell."

On 22nd October 1918, 24th Field Ambulance was ordered to enter the town and clear the civilians. Sgt Major House wrote in his personal diary.

Oct 22nd 1918.

We had to push on to ST AMAND as we had instructions from the French that there were 2,000 refugees there and the town was being severely bombarded.

We marched 16 miles this day in the rain and billeted at a sugar refinery just outside the town, as it was anything but healthy a little way up the road.

Oct 23rd 1918.

We sent up everyone available to search the houses and cellars as the people would not come out and I do not blame them.

It seems the Germans had driven the civilians in front of them for about 15 miles, and when we got close on their heels they dumped them in ST AMAND. As soon as our troops got into the town the enemy had a fine excuse for shelling it.

In the cellars the living were sleeping with the dead; the idea was to get them back to our billets in General Service Wagons, transfer them to Motor lorries and evacuate them.

The plan was simple, the carrying out of it, just the reverse. To begin with the roads behind us were blown up as we advanced, and where houses had been knocked down they quickly disappeared into the shell holes in the roads, consequently the motor convoy did not reach us that day.

If the occasion had not been so pitiable, the trial of wagons arriving with their human freight seemed bizarre, they were mostly old people and very young ones!, as the Bosche hung on to all the able bodied ones.

We had hundreds of civilians arriving, most of them frightened to death and what can we do with them, they all seem to have parcels or something tied up in large handkerchiefs.

All are starving and our ration wagons have been unable to reach us owing to the bad state of the roads and we have not enough food for ourselves, they hang around the cookhouse meekly asking for food, but what can we do for so many?

A girl arrives on a stretcher who appears to be in the last stages of

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consumption as she is a living skeleton. We direct them into several barns and a few cottages close by, they are packed to suffocation. It is also necessary to have a maternity ward. We can only do our best. Heaps of them required medical care. We try to separate the sexes and provide sanitary accommodation after some fashion but it all seems rather hopeless. They all want something done, most seem to have lost all their relations and they talk all through the night. The next day we get some lorries and start evacuating them, the trouble begins again they appear to have wandered all over the place, we get a few in one lorry and when our backs are turned they are out again looking for a parcel or a relative. We are left with one dead woman whom we try to identify, we give slips of paper to some of the refugees, who appear to know her, to write down her name and where she came from. As they all wrote down something different it was rather difficult.

In all, 2,000 people were evacuated.

CROIX DE GUERRE

In commemoration of the extraordinary devotion to duty in the evacuation of sick and wounded civilians from St Amand during violent enemy bombardment from 22nd to 25th October, the 24th (1st Wessex) Field Ambulance was awarded the Croix de Guerre with Silver Gilt Star.

The citation was confirmed in the French General Order No. 11,724D of 19th November 1918 and signed by Marshal Pétain. The cross was pinned to the unit flag at a ceremony in Enghein in Belgium in February 1919 by General Degoutte. Since medical units did not have flags or 'colours' as such, and since it was the tradition of the French when awarding the Croix de Guerre, for the General to pin it to the units colours, a flag had to be found. Private Parminter, L.E., a tailor hastily came up with a solution: he sewed two bed sheets together for the occasion. He made the cross from red cotton and the crest was embroidered on one of the sheets by a Belgian girl from the village. The 8th Division sign of a white square with a central red square completed the design.

The episode is best described by the original citation:

Le Maréchal Commandant en Chef Les Armées Françaises du Nord et du Nord-Est cite à l'Ordre du Corps d'Armée:

La 24ème Ambulance de Campagne Britannique (8ème D.I.W.)

"Du 22 au 25 Octobre 1918, dans une ville violemment bombardée par l'ennemi, tout le personnel de cette formation sanitaire, sous les ordres du Lieutenant-Colonel R. Burgess, a procédé, de jour et de nuit, avec un dévouement incomparable, à la recherche des

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blessés civils dans les différents quartiers de la ville; les a pansés et reconfortés, avant de les évacuer sur l'arrière. A, dans des conditions difficiles, opéré les cas urgents. A procédé à l'évacuation d'environ 2,000 blessés, malades ou impotents, après leur avoir donné les premiers soins nécessaires."

Au Grand Quartier Général, le 19 Novembre 1918 Le Maréchal Commandant en Chef les Armées de L'Est Signé: Pétain.

"BY ORDER OF THE ARMY:

The 24th British Ambulance Company (8th Infantry Division) from the 22nd to the 25th October 1918 in a town heavily bombarded by the enemy, all the personnel of this medical unit, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R Burgess, proceeded by day and night, with incomparable devotion, to seek out civilian wounded in different parts of the town: to dress and comfort them before evacuation to the rear. In these difficult conditions, they operated on the urgent cases, proceeded to evacuate about 2,000 wounded, sick and disabled after giving them necessary first aid"

In addition to the Unit Award, Lt Col Burgess was awarded a personal Croix de Guerre for his part in the action. The medal was also awarded to three other officers and a sergeant from the Military Mounted Police for distinguished service at St Amand.

In 1989, Brigadier Burgess, the son of Lt Col Burgess visited our annual camp at Saughton, and presented the Officers' Mess with his father's medal, which includes the Croix de Guerre which was personally presented to him.

THE MEDAL

The actual medal, presented to the 24th (1/Wx) Field Ambulance, was mounted in a frame by Colonel Ransom Pickard CB, CMG,TD and presented by Lt Col Burgess DSO, MC, Croix de Guerre, to his Worship the Mayor of Exeter at a ceremony at the Exeter Guildhall on 2nd May 1922. On handing over the medal, Lt Col Burgess said that when he took over command of the unit from Col Pickard that they had:

"almost reached perfection. They had been through many engagements and trials, and as one would expect from the citizens of Exeter and Devon, they had won distinction. The great characteristics of the men serving in the Unit were that they worked exceedingly hard, and were extremely kind to anyone suffering or in distress. On the occasion of the action for which the French Government awarded the Unit the Croix de Guerre, the men of the ambulance had worked under conditions of great danger for a long time and

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reduced the sufferings of the inhabitants of St Amand to a minimum". Col Burgess said it would be: "most appropriate to ask the City to take charge of the Croix so that the citizens of the future, as well as of the present, would have something to remember the unit by".

The medal remained there for many years together with the historic flag and the citation was kept as part of the Mess Silver in the Officers' Mess. On amalgamation of 211 and 219 to form 243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital, the Medal was returned to the Mayor of Exeter, and the Banner laid up in Exeter Cathedral as it was felt that these should remain in Devon in the spirit of Lt Col Burgess' original wish.

Once a year, at our Annual Camp, it has been a tradition of 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) to troop the medal through the ranks of the unit, whilst the citation is read, so that all members of the unit are made aware of this glorious page of our history.

October 1989 marked the 70th Anniversary of the award, and to celebrate this occasion, the Mayor of St Amand-les-Eaux invited members of the unit to visit the town and lay wreaths on their war memorial. The Commanding Officer, Col I. R. Thomas, received the Medal of Honour of the Town and members of the unit visited the school of Notre Dame des Anges which was used as a hospital in 1918.

On the 75th Anniversary, in October 1993, the whole unit paraded through the streets of the town led by Col B. J. ("Jigger") Foster, OSIJ, our Commanding Officer.

The green medal ribbon was seven narrow red stripes is still worn with honour on the left shoulder of the No 2 Service Dress, and a special Croix de Guerre Fourragère lanyard may be worn on the opposite shoulder to the Corps

LES ARMÉE FRANÇAISES

The British Army is well known for the peculiar and often quirky traditions of the Service and it is thought to be a unique tradition of the Wessex Field Hospital amongst the Army Medical Services that, after toasting the Queen and the Colonels in Chief of the Corps making up the unit, a toast is drunk to the French Armies!

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APPENDIX 1

**THE AWARD OF THE CROIX E GUERRE (1914 - 1918)
TO UNITS OF THE BRITISH ARMY****THE CROIX DE GUERRE**

1. The Croix de Guerre was established on 8th April 1915 by the French Government to commemorate Mentions in Despatches, both to individuals and to units. The different classes of Despatch may be recognised by the emblem on the ribbon:

- a. Army Despatch *Bronze Palm Branch* (Palme en Bronze)
- b. Army Corps Despatch *Silver Gilt Star* (Etoile en Vermeil)
- c. Divisional Despatch *Silver Star*
- d. Bridge, Regimental or Unit Despatch *Bronze star*

2. The medal ribbon for the 1914 - 18 campaign was green with 7 narrow red stripes, but for 1939 - 45 campaigns the ribbon was changed to green with 2 broad red stripes on the outer edge and 3 narrow red stripes between.

3. When an individual or unit has been cited twice for the Croix de Guerre, the Fourragère (lanyard) in the colour of the Croix de Guerre may be authorised by the French Government, but its award is not automatic and requires a specific decree of the French Government.

**UNITS OF THE BRITISH ARMY WHICH RECEIVED THE
AWARD**

4. So far as it has been possible to trace, 12 units of the British Army received the award - counting the 56th Infantry Brigade as one unit, and were:

- a. 5th Field Battery Royal Artillery.
- b. 2nd Battalion The Devonshire Regiment.
- c. 1st/4th Battalion The King's (Shropshire Light Infantry) 56th Infantry Brigade in 19th Division.
- d. 8th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (The Leeds Rifles).
- e. 6th Battalion The Black Watch.
- f. 9th Battalion The Tank Corps.
- g. 12th (Service) Battalion The Cheshire Regiment.

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h. 7th (Service) Battalion The South Wales Borderers.

i. 12th (Service) Battalion The Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders.

j. The 24th Field Ambulance RAMC.

k. 688 Mechanical Transport Company Army Service Corps.

5. Each action was the subject of a Citation ("L'Ordre de l'Armée"), and each decoration award by the French Government was confirmed by the award of a certificate.

6. It is customary in some foreign armies to decorate the Regimental Standards and Colours with medals, and to place on the pike a Fourragère. The regulations relating to Standards, Guidons and Colours in the British Army make no provision for the display of such decorations and in consequence the methods adopted by the British units concerned vary considerably.

DRESS EMBELLISHMENTS

7. As the awards under consideration were made collectively to the units as a whole, they did not entitle individual members of the units to wear the medal, which is the right only of recipients of personal awards.

8. Being conscious of the honour of the award the British units were desirous of some form of dress embellishment to commemorate it, but other than the Fourragère specifically authorised by the French Government, no emblem was designed for wear on the uniform, with permanently or temporarily, by individuals of the unit decorated. In consequence, British units adopted their own embellishments without seeking uniformity, the nearest to the Fourragère being the lanyards worn by the 9th Royal Tank Regiment (1940 - 45), the 6/7th Battalion The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) and the 128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC. Other embellishments included a piece of medal ribbon worn on the upper arm and a Cockade of the ribbon in the cap.

9. With the introduction of the battledress an attempt was made officially to standardise the embellishment, and a shoulder flash of Croix de Guerre ribbon was authorised for wear by the units concerned. The flash consisted of a piece of the 1914 - 18 ribbon in full width, half an inch in depth, worn horizontally near the top of each sleeve, but below the shoulder title when the latter is worn. Originally the distinction was granted to:

- a. 2nd Battalion The Devonshire Regiment.
- b. 8th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles)
- c. 1st/4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

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10. Under Army Order 188 of 1950 the following units were authorised to wear the flash:

- a. 5th Field Battery Royal Artillery.
- b. 6th Battalion The Black Watch (RHR).
- c. 128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC.

11. The following announcement was made in Army Order 63 of 1968: Honorary Distinctions, TAVR:

Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve that the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve units named below may be allowed to wear distinctive emblems of dress to devote honorary distinctions award to their predecessors.

12. According to the Bulletin of the Military Historical Society, November 1973, personnel of 128 (Wessex) Field Ambulance RAMC wore:

- a. The flash on both sleeves of the battledress.
- b. A lanyard in the colours of the Croix de Guerre ribbon (green and red) over the left shoulder. 211 (W) CCS RAMC (V) did not initially continue the flash in 1967.

APPENDIX 2

COMMANDING OFFICERS 1914-1996**24 FIELD AMBULANCE RAMC****1914-1922**

Col	R Pickard CB	
Maj	T Duncan MC	)
Lt Col	W Blackwood	) Temporary acting at times
Maj	F Alderson	) 1910-1917
Lt Col	F D Blandy MC	
Lt Col	R Burgess DSO MC Croix de Guerre	

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128 (WESSEX) FIELD AMBULANCE RAMC**1922-1939**

Lt Col	G L Thornton MC
Lt Col	R Ward MC
Lt Col	F R Sandford MC

1939-1946

Lt Col	G T Symons
Lt Col	A L Crockford MC TD
Lt Col	J M Scott OBE TD
Lt Col	P Wood DSO MBE
Lt Col	D Lewis

1947-1967

Lt Col	J N Rudd TD
Lt Col	C A Graham TD
Col	J W A Crabtree OBE TD
Lt Col	Trusted
Lt Col	D H Forster TD
Lt Col	P H D Lewars
Lt Col	B J Muir OBE TD

**211 (WESSEX) CASUALTY CLEARING STATION
RAMC(V)****211 (WESSEX) FIELD HOSPITAL RAMC(V)****1970-31 DEC 1995**

Lt Col	J P Grier TD
Lt Col	K Clapton TD
Lt Col	D N Norrie TD
Lt Col	J Francis TD
Col	I Thomas TD
Col	B Toms TD
Col	B J Foster OSJ
Col	J R Young TD

243 (THE WESSEX) FIELD HOSPITAL RAMC(V)**01 JAN 1996**

Col	K W Robinson
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Unit shield, 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)

219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (Volunteers)



Officers of 219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V), December 1995

Painting held at RHQ, Keynsham. Original by Richard [Rick] Coleman

<https://www.cartoonists.co.uk/rickcoleman/index.html>

219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) was formed in 1985 by the redesignation of **219 (Wessex) General Hospital RAMC (V)**, a 200-bed hospital which had been formed in 1967 through the amalgamation of three independent TA medical units in Bath, Bristol and Portsmouth during the major reorganisation of the TA:

- **19 (Southern) (City of Bath) General Hospital RAMC (TA)**, formed during the Second World War and served in the Middle East.
- **129 (Bristol) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)**, formed in 1937 from the remaining detachment of its First World War predecessor, the 3rd (South Midland) Field Ambulance.
- **130 (Portsmouth) Field Ambulance RAMC (TA)**, whose First World War predecessor had been the 3rd Wessex Field Ambulance (TF), formed in 1908. The current Portsmouth detachment of 243 Field Hospital is both a lineal and geographical successor.

129 and 130 Field Ambulances both saw service with the 43rd Wessex Division during the invasion of Northern Europe in 1944. 129 Field Ambulance landed in Normandy on 24 June 1944 and thereafter

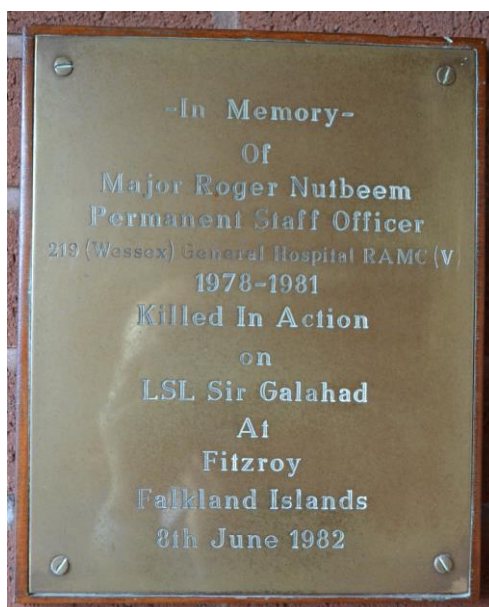
accompanied the Division (and 130 Field Ambulance) through France, Belgium and Holland and into Germany. Both units participated in Op VERITABLE (part of an Allied pincer-movement aiming to clear the area between the Roer and Rhine rivers of German forces) in early 1945, crossing the Rhine on the same date, 26 March 1945.⁴⁰

All three units were disbanded immediately after the war, but when the TA was reformed in 1947 the three medical units were re-established in the same locations.

In 1969 the headquarters of 219 (Wessex) General Hospital moved from Bath to the TA Centre in Ashmead Road, Keynsham, near Bristol. In 1973 the Bristol detachment also relocated to Keynsham.⁴¹

The unit was granted the Freedom of the Town of Keynsham on 4 March 1982 (see next page). This was exercised in 1983 and 1993, but sadly the honour lapsed with local government re-organisation in 1997.

The unit's former Permanent Staff Officer, Major Roger Nutbeem, was killed on 8 June 1982 in the Falklands War in the bombing of RFA *Sir Galahad*. He is commemorated with a plaque outside the entrance to the RHQ in Keynsham (see below). A ward at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands, was also renamed in his honour, as was the HQ of 202 (Midlands) General Hospital.



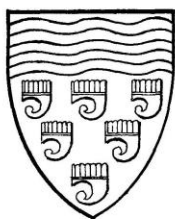
Plaque commemorating Major Roger Nutbeem, at entrance to RHQ, 243 Field Hospital

In 1985 the unit's role was changed to a British Army of the Rhine 400 bed hospital and it was re-designated as **219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V)**.

219 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) ceased to exist on 1 January 1996, when it amalgamated with 211 (Wessex) Field Hospital RAMC (V) to form **243 (The Wessex) Field Hospital (V)**.

⁴⁰ War Diaries 129 Field Ambulance, 1944 – 1945, uploaded to the internet in 2010-2011 by Jonathan Ball, in '129 Field Ambulance, 43rd Div - Normandy, Market Garden & crossing the Rhine' <http://ww2talk.com/index.php?threads/129-field-ambulance-43rd-div-normandy-market-garden-crossing-the-rhine.23705/page-2> (accessed 24 November 2020)

⁴¹ In 1992 the buildings at Keynsham were enhanced at very considerable cost in anticipation of long-term occupancy.



At a meeting of the Council of the District of Wansdyke held in the Town Hall, Keynsham, on Thursday the fourth day of March, 1982, it was Resolved that:—

WE, THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF WANSDYKE IN THE COUNTY OF AVON being appreciative of the importance of the role of the 219 (Wessex) General Hospital of the Royal Army Medical Corps (V), and being desirous of recognising and confirming the ties of friendly association which have long existed between the town of Keynsham and the Unit,

DO HEREBY CONFER upon the Officer Commanding and All Ranks of the Unit

THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE TOWN OF KEYNSHAM and thereby the right privilege honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the town on all ceremonial occasions with colours flying, bands playing, drums beating and bayonets fixed.

The Common Seal of the Council of the District of Wansdyke was hereunto affixed the 27th day of March, 1982

Chairman

Chairman

Chief Executive and Clerk

Chief Executive and Clerk

Award of the Freedom of the Town of Keynsham to 219 (Wessex) General Hospital RAMC (V), 4 March 1982

'With colours flying, bands playing, drums beating and bayonets fixed'
(N.B. Other Ranks in the RAMC carry bayonets but never fix them on parade)



*Unit shield, 219 Wessex General Hospital RAMC (V), 1967-85
(Note that the background colours are those of the RAMC, symmetrically placed)*

Unit Memorabilia of 243 Field Hospital



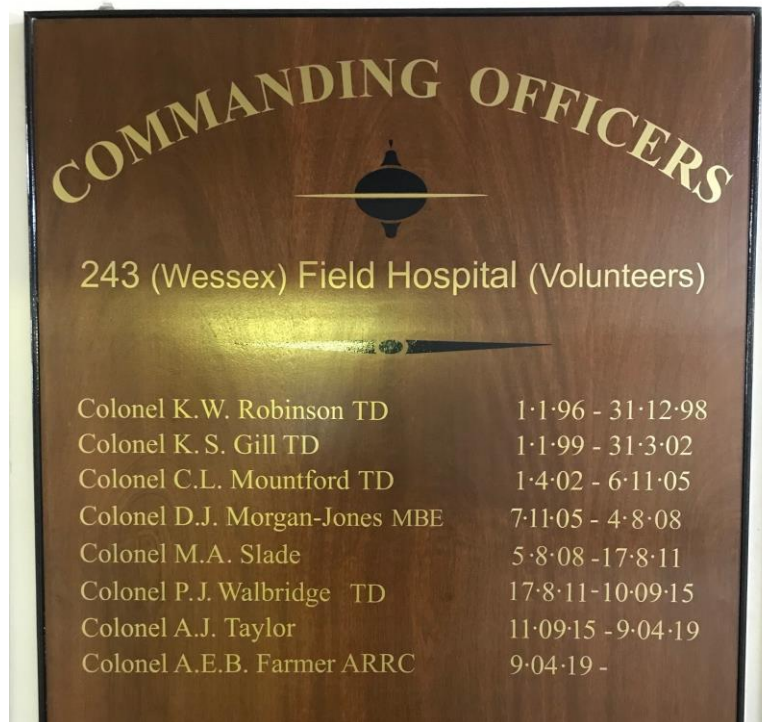
Hand-built model of SS Uganda, proudly displayed in RHQ Officers Mess, 243 Field Hospital

This model was created by Bernard Seymour RAF (retired). It was donated to 243 Field Hospital on his death in May 2014 by his widow Mrs Frances Seymour 'in grateful recognition of the services rendered to this country in wartime by medical personnel of the Reserve services'. Medical personnel on board SS Uganda during the Falklands Conflict (Op CORPORATE) included Royal Naval medical personnel, medics from 16 Field Ambulance RAMC on the return journey, and individual reinforcements (not TA personnel) from both Regular and TA medical units, including Major Nutbeem previously from 219 (Wessex) General Hospital, then 2iC of 16 Field Ambulance.



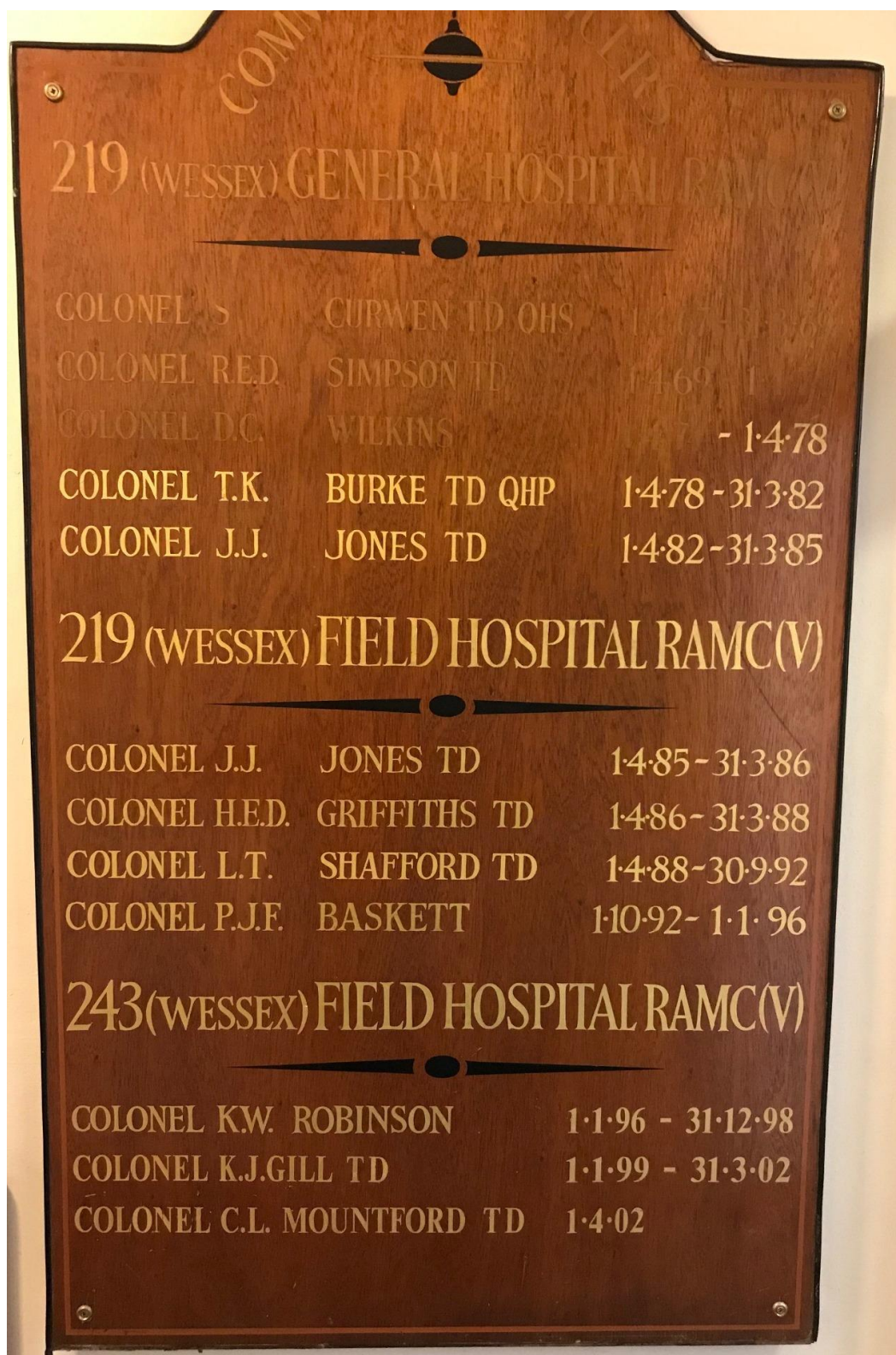
QARANC ornamental side drum, RHQ Officers' Mess 243 Field Hospital

Commanding Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors of 243 Field Hospital



Command Appointment Boards (photographs kindly provided by Captain George Harrill)

Commanding Officers of 219 (Wessex) General Hospital / Field Hospital RAMC (V)



Command Appointment Board (photograph kindly provided by Captain George Harrill)

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following for their assistance with this unit history: Brigadier (retd) Alistair Macmillan L/RAMC, Colonel Paul Walbridge L/RAMC (Commanding Officer, 2011-2015), Colonel Alistair Taylor L/RAMC (Commanding Officer, 2015-2019), Colonel Timothy Chambers L/RAMC, Captain George Harrill RAMC (Permanent Staff Administrative Officer and Unit Archivist), Bob Laurence (Bristol Branch RAMC Association), Army Graphics Andover, and Terry Hissey (Historical Branch Army). The author apologises for any errors or omissions.

This unit history, and histories of other Multi-Role Medical Regiments and Medical Regiments of the UK's Defence Medical Services, and their predecessor field hospitals and medical regiments, are available via the Unit Histories section on the Friends of Millbank website: <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/unit-histories/>

If you wish to correct any errors or omissions, or contribute further to this unit history, please contact the author at chairman@friendsofmillbank.org



New unit shield, August 2024 onwards,
243 (Wessex) Multi-Role Medical Regiment
(courtesy of Captain George Harrill)

The future beckons