

**RED MAIDS SCHOOL,
A TEMPORARY HOSPITAL FOR
WORLD WAR 1 WOUNDED SOLDIERS
(1916-1920)**

(Compiled by Veronica Bowerman, 2014)



*Several of the wounded soldiers taking a breath of fresh air
outside the main school entrance*

On 4 August, 1916 the Red Cross converted Red Maids School into a section of the Second Southern General Hospital** with 200 beds.

The Merchant Venturers' Society offered the school the Manor House at Clifton and the Governors took a short tenancy of 5, York Place for the Staff. The school stayed in Clifton from 1916 until 1920.



Photo of one of the wards awaiting the arrival of wounded soldiers.



Whitson Ward – showing nursing staff with seated wounded soldiers.



Ypres Ward photo includes several wounded soldiers in beds and nursing staff.

After the War the girls were not able to return to Westbury until the beginning of 1920 because the house required extensive repairs and redecoration which cost the Governors £1,000 more than they had received from the Red Cross.'

BACKGROUND:

****THE 2ND SOUTHERN GENERAL HOSPITAL, BRISTOL**

1908 - The 2nd Southern General Hospital came into being as a result of the Territorial Force Act. Staff were appointed from that year but only mobilised for annual training lasting a month each year at the Bristol Royal Infirmary.

1914 – The first hospital train bringing wounded soldiers to the city arrived at Temple Meads on 2 February carrying 120 men wounded at Mons. They were treated at the BRI in the new wing opened in 1912 plus the new infirmary at Southmead. More and more of the Bristol hospitals made room for wounded soldiers as the war continued.

1915 - The authorities in London were demanding additional beds which resulted in auxiliary Red Cross Hospitals being opened.

1916 and 1917 - Beds were being provided in buildings converted into temporary hospitals including Red Maids' School at Westbury-on-Trym. Hospitals under the jurisdiction of 2nd Southern General Hospital were not just confined to Bristol. They were scattered all over the counties of Gloucester, Somerset and Wiltshire.

The work of administering this very large area, with its numerous scattered hospitals, was very arduous, and at times, such as during the great battle on the Somme in 1916 and the attacks in Flanders in 1917, the pressure was for weeks at a time almost more than the staff could withstand. There were many days when the supply of beds fell short of demand.

1917 – By the autumn the wounded intake had reached its peak and no further hospitals were added, although some extra accommodation was found in the Bristol General Hospital.

1918 - At the time of the Armistice (11 November) practically the whole clerical staff and the telephone operators were women.

1919 - The 2nd Southern was speedily closed down during the first four months. The BRI despatched its remaining cases to Bath, or the Red Maids' section or handed them over to other hospitals. By May just a few staff were left in a temporary office in Clifton to wind up this great hospital after almost five years.



SPECIAL MENTION:

The Bristol Royal Infirmary was the first hospital in Bristol to become part of the 2nd Southern General Hospital.

- Their ophthalmic centre which was created to deal with men who had lost or seriously injured their sight. Artificial eyes would be fitted when feasible.

Southmead Hospital carried out specialist surgery.

REFERENCES

- Bristol and the Great War 1914-19, Editors George F. Stone and Charles Wells, Published by J.W.Arrowsmith Ltd., Quay Street, Bristol 1920.
- Apparelled in Red (The History of Red Maids School) by Jean Vanes, 1984.
- The Henleaze Book by Veronica Bowerman, Redcliffe Press, 2006.
- Many thanks to Paul Townsend (brizzlebornandbred) for allowing me to use these historic photos. For further details of his wonderful collection please go to this website: <http://www.bristolpast.co.uk/>

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