

# The Gazette



Brigadier Helen Gillespie, M.B.E., R.R.C., Q.H.N.S., the Matron-in-Chief and Director of the British Army Nursing Services in Cyprus during a tour of the Middle East.

## *Journal of The Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps Association*

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Administrator and Chairman ... DAME LOUISA WILKINSON, D.B.E., R.R.C.  
General Secretary

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## Editorial

GREETINGS members of the Association :—

The Spring number of the GAZETTE I hope is going to be out in sufficient time for you to make the necessary arrangements for your visit to town to coincide with the Annual General Meeting and Re-union on Saturday, 19th June, 1954. As you are aware this is the first time we have combined the two events and it is hoped that Branch representatives who could not otherwise attend both functions will now have an opportunity of bringing forward ideas which will benefit all and the successful running of the Association, and that Q.A.R.A.N.C. Other Ranks will have an opportunity of putting forward their ideas.

Material for the GAZETTE is still slow in coming in, more particularly the news of the happenings in Units, this is of interest to all readers, and I particularly stress that Detachment Officers in Units should make an effort to see that the everyday happenings in their Units are put into an article and forwarded to me, in this way officers and personnel will be kept in closer touch ; likewise the work of the Association members in branches throughout the country who are retired or married kept up to date with service news, this I am sure will make all of us look forward to each edition of the GAZETTE—It's up to you, send me the material and I will produce it.

The response to the request for articles on how "Q.A." Day was spent was gratifying, and those units who sent articles are to be congratulated.

The Centenary of Florence Nightingale and the Commemoration Services both within the Corps and in the Civilian World, at home and overseas, which commence in May will be a great interest to us all ; members wherever you are let us know what you are doing, in this way we will all be re-united in carrying out the work so nobly started 100 years ago.

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## Visit of the Matron-in-Chief and Director of Army Nursing Services to M.E.L.F and Malta

BRIGADIER H. S. Gillespie, M.B.E., R.R.C., Q.H.N.S., recently toured M.E.L.F. and visited all military hospitals and some of the other medical units in the theatre. Q.A.R.A.N.C. personnel had been looking forward to her visit and were delighted to welcome her in the various areas. It is not often one has the opportunity of actually seeing and entertaining the head of one's Corps overseas and in this case it gave a great deal of pleasure to all. We feel too that she will have a greater appreciation of our responsibilities, having seen the various units and the conditions under which we work and live, as, although she had served in Egypt and Cyprus during the war years, she had not previously seen any of the hospitals which are now in use.

The Director commenced her tour in the Canal Zone, arriving from London by air on Wednesday 3rd February, 1954. She expressed her appreciation of our good weather in comparison to the snow and ice of England. The Director of Medical Services, Major-General W. A. D. Drummond and Mrs. Drummond met her at the Airport and escorted her to Kensington Village of "Khamseen" fame.

On Thursday and Friday the British Military Hospital, Fayid, was visited. This is the largest Service Hospital in the Middle East and works at top pressure throughout the year. Most military patients requiring specialist treatment are sent here, consequently the work is most satisfying and there is a wide variety of interesting cases. This hospital is the descendant of the wartime No. 19 General Hospital and still consists of widely dispersed wards and departments in temporary hutting. A number of the wards have recently been decorated in pastel shades which give them a softer and brighter appearance and induces a sense of cheerfulness among the patients. According to home standards this hospital is lacking in many of the essentials to which one is accustomed when carrying out basic nursing procedures; the Director, however, saw much had been done to remedy the defects and discussed with the staff the projects for future improvements to bring the hospital up to the standard of a comparable hospital under the National Health Scheme. Incidentally, this is the first overseas Service Hospital to be recognised by the Royal College of Surgeons, England for qualifying appointments for the final Fellowship Examinations.

These two days were arduous ones for the Director but she found time to speak to all patients and staff and appeared tireless through-

out. Before leaving Fayid, mention must be made of the fact that, stationed at the B.M.H. was the first "QA" other rank to be awarded the A.R.R.C.—Corporal Gallant—who was personally congratulated by the Director.

On Saturday 6th, Brigadier Gillespie was taken to see various "Health" and Medical Centres, which have been modelled on the latest United Kingdom designs. One of these had been built by the East African Pioneer Corps—prior to this they only had a tent. Much credit is due to the self help and enterprise of these Pioneers, who have made a very reasonable Centre comprising waiting, consulting, examination and treatment rooms.

A visit was also made to 35 Field Ambulance and the Brigadier saw the active service "set up" of the Field Units. She was impressed with the standard of "Non Touch" technique which is now the routine in all units. Her visit to these units at the "sharp end" was keenly appreciated by the Regimental Medical Orderlies who were most enthusiastic in demonstrating their prowess in first aid and para medical techniques. Morale soared when she expressed her praise of the standard of the efficiency and comfort obtained in their "desert" consulting and treatment rooms.

On Monday, 8th the Brigadier visited the British Station Hospital, Suez, which is situated near the southern end of the Canal. This again was a war time hutted hospital, which, however, has become much reduced in size. The C.O., Major Douglas Paton, a National Service Officer, told her that although they were at the end of the pipe-line they were really a very happy unit. Q.A.R.A.N.C. other ranks are accommodated in single rooms here and have a comfortable rest room.

In the afternoon a visit was paid to the Convalescent Training Depot at Deversoir which is situated at the west bank of the Canal. The road leading to Deversoir bristles with armed guards and check points. An escort vehicle accompanied the Director on this journey and for the remainder of her tour in the Canal Zone. In the Depot was the large Physiotherapy Department which at all times works at high pressure to make service personnel fighting fit before returning to their units. Brigadier Gillespie met Miss Dorothy Garson, the Welfare Officer of the Order of St. John and B.R.C.S. who showed her round the Services Welfare Department. Before leaving she was also shown round the Medical Centre and sick bay.

In the evening the Director dined at the W.R.A.C. Officers Mess, Ladysmith Camp. Those of you who served here during the war will remember it as the R.A.M.C. Officers Mess of No. 78 Neuro-pathic Hospital. A fellow guest was the Director of the Womens Royal Naval Service, Dame May Lloyd, D.B.E., A.D.C., who was also on tour. It is probably quite unprecedented to have two Directors of the Womens Services in one theatre at the same time.

On Tuesday 9th, a visit to Tel-el-Kebir was made. As the Director entered the camp she was shown the old fortifications used during the battle of Tel-el-Kebir on 13th September, 1882—when Sir Garnett Wolsley defeated Arabi Pasha. As a result of the narrowing perimeter the old wartime hospital had to be given up and accommodation found in a series of married quarters and a community centre. This hospital is truly described as being at the receiving end. Its main work is surgical, mostly traumatic in nature, due to accidents and gun shot injuries. Q.A.R.A.N.C. other ranks have recently been posted there and are doing a sterling job of work. The Brigadier left this outpost with a feeling, as far as the Army Nursing Corps was concerned it was indeed all "Sir Garnett."

The Northern hospital of the Canal Zone, the B.S.H. El Ballah, was visited on the 10th February. Here, also in this isolated desert hospital much is being done to raise the standard. A new casualty and pre-operative ward was almost ready to be taken into use. The recently decorated Welfare Department of the Order of St. John and B.R.C.S. provides a comfortable and homely atmosphere for the "up" patients. Quarters were being prepared for the accommodation of Q.A.R.A.N.C. other ranks. It was a great disappointment to many that they were not ready for occupation at the time of her visit. After lunch the Director left for Port Said where she visited the Medical Centre of the 1st Bn. Scots Guards. This centre, decorated in pastel shades with its flowers and pictures and with its neat and smart staff created the impression of cheerful efficiency. The M.R.S. lies adjacent to this Centre and is tastefully decorated. Before leaving Port Said Brigadier Gillespie called on Capt. H. Lane of H.M.S. Delight and had tea on board.

On Thursday 11th, the day was spent at the Station Hospital, Moascar which is the only pre-war hospital in this Zone. Here again the hospital is being redecorated and reorganised to meet its modern commitments. This hospital has a very busy Maternity Unit and has recently re-opened its surgical wards. Unfortunately there is insufficient accommodation at present to allow all the Q.A.R.A.N.C. other ranks to live in the hospital precincts. During her stay in Moascar the Director was a guest of the Brigadier's Mess. In the evening she dined with General Sir Francis and Lady Festing.

Throughout her visit to the Canal Zone the Director was most favourably impressed with the high morale of all ranks and the high standard of the nursing.

Brigadier Gillespie left the "Active Service" atmosphere of B.T.E. on the 12th February and spent the next four days in more friendly surroundings in Cyprus. Here she visited the B.M.H. Nicosia, the Medical Centres in the different parts of the island and was shown over the site of the new hospital at Dekhalia. On her round of the hospital she noted all the renovations done and in particular the