

Welkom Vriend

As familiar male faces disappeared from towns and villages, strange ones filled with loss, pain and bewilderment took their places.

When Antwerp fell in October 1914, 10,000 Belgian soldiers stranded in Ostend were quickly evacuated to Britain. Many were wounded and, with only a few hours' notice, the Kent VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) turned some of Kent's largest houses into hospitals.

Quex House in Birchington, now known as the Powell-Cotton Museum, was one of the first and, incredibly, the museum still has the Admission and Discharge Registers for the hospital. These rare records list each patient's personal information together with details of their wounds and treatment.

Oscar Van Audenhove from Ghent was a patient who spent several months of his recovery working with Major Powell-Cotton on his dioramas. The mural he painted can still be seen today and several of the patients' stories are now being told, together with those of the nurses and volunteers who worked in the area, through a new exhibition.