

First World War at Quex

A FEW NOTES ON QUEX AS A RED CROSS HOSPITAL DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The photograph of the spoons and the inscription under was taken at the Canberra War Memorial Museum, Australia, by Mr. F. A. Turner, of 329 Canterbury Road, Birchington, in March 1981, while on a visit. Mr. Turner lived in Birchington nearly all his life and as some of his relatives used to work at Quex he was very interested in the display and knowing my interest in Birchington he let me have a copy of the photograph.

The official number of raids on Thanet was 119.

War declared 4th August 1914

On the 11th a meeting was held in the town hall and £116-17-6 was subscribed in aid of the wives and children of those men who had been called up. On the 14th a second meeting took place and £65 was taken. On October 15th at 5am wounded Belgians arrived from the front very tired and dirty and were taken to the Homes.

A record of the War Work of the people of Birchington, which includes Quex, is beautifully set out in a volume, bound in red morocco and edged with gold. It is kept in the Birchington Parish Church and now stored in the Church Archives, but a scanned copy is also available in the BHT Museum.

The volume measures about 12 inches by 10 inches and was compiled by Major George F. Hollands and presented to the Church of All Saints as a record of the patriotic service by the inhabitants of Birchington. Mr. S. Sandle bound the book and Miss G. Smith made the drawings of the Homes. Mr. Charles Gambrill was Churchwarden in 1909.

Quex is one of the houses and homes opened for wounded and invalid soldiers. Quex was opened on 14th October 1914 and had 46 beds. Mrs. Hannah Powell Cotton was the V.A.D. Commandant. She had 37 ladies as helpers and nurses. The first patients were wounded Belgian soldiers and while I was on a visit to Belgium in 1923, I stayed with one of the Belgian soldiers who had been at Quex and had happy memories of his stay there.

The Winter Garden was the dining room and I have a photograph of the dining room with Nurse Matron. Nurse Matron lived at Treveddoe, 24 Epple Road, a house now demolished on the north side of the railway arch in Epple Road.

Later in the war, British soldiers were at Quex and also Australian. When the tree was planted at Quex to commemorate the Christening of Christopher Powell Cotton, it was an Australian soldier who was a proxy Godfather. In the photograph of the tree planting, the Australian is seen in the hole dug to take the tree. Quex closed as a hospital 31st January 1919.

Birchington and the First World War 1914-1918

The following houses and homes were opened for wounded and invalid soldiers.

Quex Park

Mrs Powell Cotton was V.A.D. Commandant.

It was opened 14th October 1914 and closed 31st January 1919.

46 beds

37 ladies as helpers or nurses