

EDITORIAL

CENTENARY OF THE ROYAL HERBERT HOSPITAL

In the year 1865 the building of the Herbert Hospital was completed and the first patients admitted, but in spite of extensive searches over a long period no definite dates of these two happenings have come to light and no foundation stone has been discovered. The following authorities have been consulted in an effort to establish the facts—AMD 1 and old War Office minutes; Librarians, War Office, Royal Army Medical College, Royal College of Nursing, British Museum and Woolwich Public Library (Miss Mays); Queen Victoria's Diaries at Windsor; "Times Index"; Daily Telegraph and Morning Post; Kentish Independent; and the Records of Woolwich District (Vincent).

Lord Herbert, Secretary of State for War, decided in 1859 that a new hospital should be constructed at Woolwich to replace the existing Garrison Hospital which was grossly overcrowded. The present site was then selected. Lord Herbert directed that the new hospital be designed upon the principles laid down by the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army and the Barrack and Hospital Improvements Committee. Many of these principles had been enunciated by Sir John Pringle a century before, the three main ones being—to avoid congregation of large numbers of sick, to give sufficient cubic space in sick wards, and to ensure abundant ventilation direct from the outer air.

The Royal Commission carried out an extensive enquiry into hospital construction in this country and received a paper from Miss Florence Nightingale containing the results of extensive experience in hospitals of every variety of construction in most European countries. The Commission also appointed a sub-committee to examine the improved civil and military hospitals built more recently in France and Belgium. After this exhaustive study of hospital construction, the Commission recommended the principles to be observed in the construction of all future military hospitals.

The hospital was designed by Douglas Galton (Late Captain, Royal Engineers), Assistant Under Secretary of State for War. The plans were examined in detail by Lord Herbert, who submitted them to Miss Nightingale, whose practical experience was of great assistance in the design. The plans were further submitted to, and received the concurrence of the Director General of the Army Medical Department and of the Barrack and Hospital Improvement Committee. And so was born the Herbert Hospital, a general hospital on the pavilion system of nearly 650 beds (including 28 beds for prisoners and a small ward for patients with "itch").

Queen Victoria visited the Herbert Hospital on the 22nd March 1900, when the Royal title was conferred.

The "Kentish Independent" of the 4th November 1865 reported that patients were being moved to the Herbert Hospital from the Royal Artillery Hospital Woolwich, and it is assumed that the first patients arrived on or about the 1st November 1865.

Celebrations to mark the Centenary have been arranged for the 12th November 1965 and will commence with the unveiling of an enlarged etching of Lord Sidney Herbert by the Director General Army Medical Services, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Drew.

1865

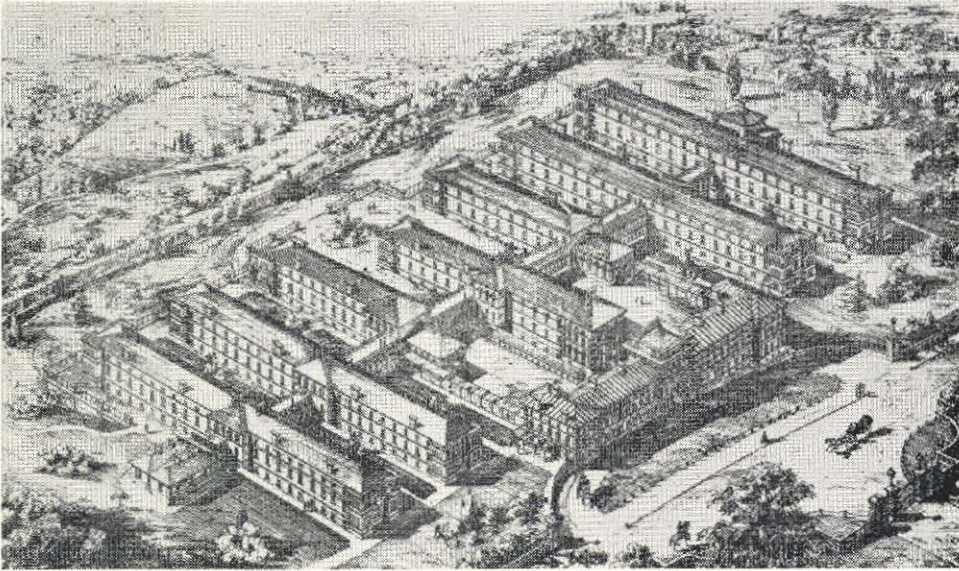


Fig. 1. THE HERBERT HOSPITAL, WOOLWICH.

Reproduced from the Report on the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich, by Douglas Galton (late Captain Royal Engineers), published by H.M.S.O.

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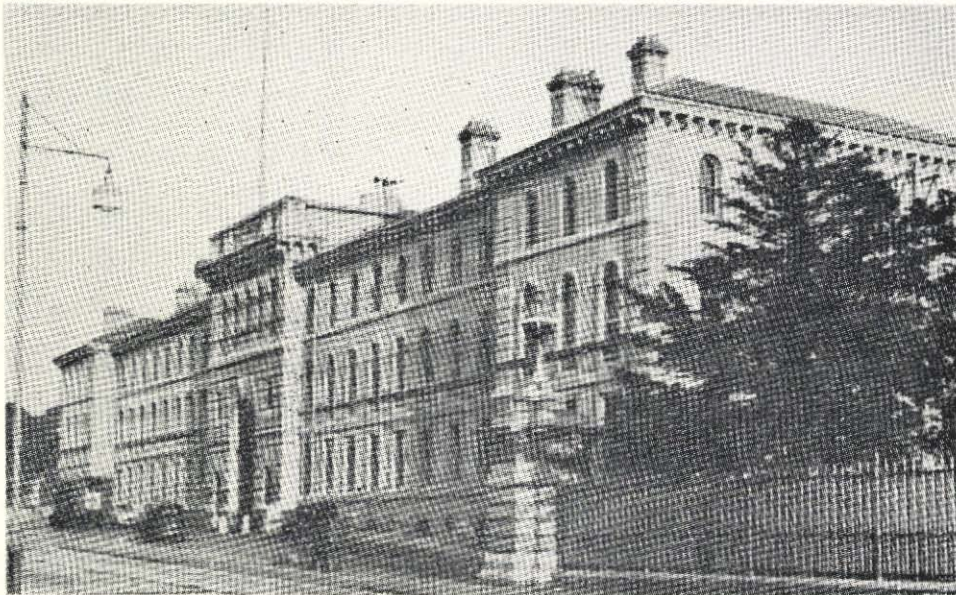


Fig. 2. ROYAL HERBERT HOSPITAL, WOOLWICH