AN IMPROVISED SHELTER FOR USE WITH A FIELD AMBULANCE.

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The construction of the improvised shelter described in detail below was worked out during the training of a composite field ambulance at Bures Camp, Suffolk, during August and September, 1934, and was originally intended for use as an advanced dressing station.

The transport given to "A" Company of the composite field ambulance consisted of two 30-cwt. lorries in lieu of three limbers.

From an administrative point of view this was most convenient, since the lorries could carry the three limber loads of company equipment, the men's greatcoats and blankets, as well as rations and fuel.

The Company was, therefore, self-contained, and in the event of its becoming detached from the ambulance, there was no necessity to send forward supplies, etc., from headquarters before settling down for the night.

Unfortunately, however, it was found that this arrangement was unsatisfactory when the ambulance was working in combined exercises with other troops. Being motor vehicles these lorries had to move in rear of "B" échelon transport and were not allowed to march with the company, with the result that they frequently became separated and the company was deprived of its stretchers and equipment when required to come into action and collect wounded.

In the light of the experience gained during these manoeuvres it is probable that 30-cwt. lorries will not be used again for company transport, and until some form of motor transport is brought into general use, we shall have to be content with limbers.

This point has been stressed at some length because two 30-cwt. lorries are essential for the construction of this shelter, but at the same time, since lorries will always be a part of Headquarters transport, it was felt that a description of its construction might still be of interest for training purposes.

An advanced dressing station in time of war will probably always be situated in a building of some description, while in stationary warfare old trenches, pillboxes, dugouts, or even a sheltered quarry might be used, but for peace-time training, what shelter is there? The equipment of a company contains no tentage, and in general, buildings, unless specially hired for the purpose, will never be available in a training area.

Further, in view of the speed of erection, the shelter might also prove useful to Headquarters when an ambulance is on the move and the few
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casualties filtering through do not justify the opening up of a main dressing station to its full extent. Imagination and assumptions are poor substitutes for concrete fact in the training of young soldiers and an imaginary building covering a neatly laid-out dressing station is a particularly poor substitute on a wet night in an open field.

It was with this object in view that the following detail was worked out.

**Equipment.**

All the equipment required is contained in the camp equipment of a field ambulance and can be drawn from the quartermaster's store, i.e.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tarpaulin, black, 30 ft. by 30 ft.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag ropes, prs...</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts, picketing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegs, tent, large</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegs, tent, small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maul</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallet</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquee curtains, single</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarred string</td>
<td>Q.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two 30-cwt. lorries from Headquarters transport carried the above equipment in addition to that of the entire company.

**Personnel.**

The personnel used for construction (vide War Establishment of a Field Ambulance. Composition in detail) was:

Nursing Orderlies: serjeant, corporal and two privates; Clerk: corporal; Wagon Orderlies: two privates—total seven; assisted by the two M.T. drivers, R.A.S.C.

It was found that with a little practice this team could erect and lay out the equipment in six minutes, and strike, pack up and be on the move in fourteen minutes.

**Method of Erection.**

The "drill" which was found to be most successful was as follows:

Two small tent pegs were driven into the ground twenty feet apart and the lorries lined up exactly parallel with the centre of the front wheels resting against the outer side of the pegs. The tarpaulin was carried out and unfolded between the lorries and drag ropes attached to the loops. These were thrown across the lorries and with a little manœuvre the tarpaulin was drawn taut.

In the meantime the peg men had driven in large pegs in the correct positions shown in fig. 1, and the drag ropes were made fast.

At the rear end, six picketing posts were threaded through the tarpaulin loops to raise it, and again made fast by drag ropes. The two sections of marquee curtains were threaded round with tarred string commencing at the rear end of the lorry on each side and finishing in the centre at the exit.

Two half marquee poles supported the tarpaulin at the entrance and...
two more, shown in the plan, kept the roof raised in the rear half of the enclosure.

The whole arrangement was then checked and squared up. This took six minutes.

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**PLAN OF TARPALIN COVERING LORRIES.**

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**ALLOTMENT OF SPACE AVAILABLE.**

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**Available Space.**

The space available inside was surprisingly large and for training purposes was allotted as shown in fig. 2.

Near the entrance was the Reception Clerk, and between the lorries
two rows of ten stretchers could be placed with a four-feet gangway between.

Of the spaces in rear, one was used for the medical officer, or for dressings, adjustment of splints, anti-tetanus serum, morphia, etc., and the other for laying out equipment, issuing hot drinks and réchauffage. The lorries, of course, were now empty, and with their rear ends open and tail boards down, could be used for extra accommodation, special cases, medical officer, company office, as the case might be.

During manœuvre periods the shelter was equally successful for housing the men at night, and the entire company could be accommodated with ease.

Fig. 3—General arrangement. Reception Clerk on the left.
Fig. 4.—Entrance. Stretcher raised for adjustment of Thomas’s Splint.
Fig. 5.—Rear view. Marquee curtains in position.

**SUMMARY.**

Advantages.—Realistic; men became extremely keen and adept at construction and lay out. Speed of erection and dismantling. Small and compact; easily camouflaged. Ample accommodation for patients, medical officer and equipment. Night shelter for personnel. Equipment available for field ambulance stores. Useful practical field work for R.A.M.C.

Disadvantages.—Useless as an advanced dressing station in combined exercises, since it is unlikely that lorries will be allocated for company transport on future occasions. Impossible to make gas proof. Only useful for peace training, when field ambulance camp equipment has been drawn.

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