

## **The Welsh Hospital for South Africa**

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At the beginning of 1900, The War in Africa was going badly for the British, the fledgling RAMC could not cope and civilian resources had to be mobilised. As a Welsh response, within three months, more than £12000 and much equipment had been secured and a 100 to 120 bed hospital and its staff (three surgeons, two assistant surgeons, eight dressers, a matron, nine nurses, eight orderlies and two cooks) had sailed for Africa, travelled 500 miles by train to Bloemfontein, then to Springfontein, where it was successfully treating the wounded and medically ill. Sadly, four of the staff died, including Professor Thomas Jones, the senior surgeon. Professor Hughes, the committee secretary, travelled to Africa to take over. Morale was restored and the work continued in good spirits.

At the end of July, the number of hospital beds was increased to 150 and the hospital was transferred to Pretoria, where there was an even greater need and a further increase to 200 beds. By the end of September, the major stresses were over and the hospital became a convalescent home. The doctors, dressers and orderlies returned in October followed by most of the nurses. Sadly, Professor Hughes contracted typhoid fever in Pretoria and died soon after arrival in England. The surgeons Lynn Thomas, Mills Roberts and Laming Evans went on to distinguished careers. The matron, Miss Lloyd, stayed behind, but died of typhoid the following year.

In its four months of active service the hospital treated more than 1,100 patients with a mortality rate of 1.05% and no amputations.

These excellent figures reflect the clean nature of the Mauser bullet, the skill of the surgeons and nurses and the use of modern technology and instruments, such as x-rays and the telephone probe to detect bullets and Lynn Thomas' tourniquet forceps.

The outstanding work of the hospital was recorded at the highest levels of the public domain and there are memorials in Springfontein, St. David's Cathedral and Corris to those who died.

*Presented to the HOMSW Meeting, Cardiff, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2014*

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