



*Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series*

## **Wantage Cottage Hospital 1886-1927**

**by Margaret Prentice**

One hundred years ago, on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1886, Wantage Cottage hospital opened in Belmont. It remained in use until the new Wantage Cottage Hospital was opened in June 1927.

Among a number of bequests contained in the will of Mr Percy Smith of Letcombe Bassett, who died in 1883, was a sum of £5000 “to be applied by them (the Trustees) in the establishment and maintenance of a Cottage Hospital for the poor and sick inhabitants of Wantage and its neighbourhood, including particularly the township of East Hanney and the parish of Letcombe Bassett”. The Trustees were his widow, Mrs Susannah Smith, Mr Llewellyn Jotcham a local solicitor and Mr William Marlow a local bank manager and they were empowered to make rules for the management of the hospital. But they were prohibited from applying any part of the bequest to the purchase of land.

A public subscription was opened and the money raised was put towards the purchase of a house in Belmont, which had just been completed by Mr Haynes a local builder. The cost of the house and the necessary alterations was about £1000 and a mortgage had to be arranged. The annual report for 1888 recorded that £100 had been paid off the mortgage debt during the year and that the committee under the Presidency of Lord Wantage hoped to clear the final £100 debt during the coming year. The legacy had been invested in stocks which yielded about £200 a year.

The newly acquired house was furnished as a hospital by Mrs Silver of Letcombe Manor in memory of her late father, Joseph Johnson Miles, Esq. The hospital had 9 beds and the medical officers were the local doctors who gave their services free. In 1891 these were Dr T G Emerson, Dr A H Barker, Dr J A Ball and Dr A J Dalton, and Mr J O Sankey of Oxford was the consulting surgeon.

In its first year the hospital admitted 28 patients. This rose to 40 in 1887, 50 in 1888, dropping to 46 in 1889, then rising to 66 in 1890 and to 77 in 1891. Of these 77, 59 were discharged cured, 8 relieved, 6 died, 1 was discharged incurable and 3 remained in the hospital at the end of the year. The average stay was 20 days and the total number of days spent by patients in hospital was 1,513. The hospital staff was also busy nursing in the town - the matron made 80 visits and the town nurse upwards of 500 visits. The provision of an ‘out-of-door nurse’ had begun as an experiment in 1888 and had been an immediate success.

The annual report for 1891, published in the Abingdon Herald, states that the subscriptions, donations etc had been about average. A more detailed entry in Burdett’s Hospital Annual records that the income was £375-1s-11d but expenditure was £443-19s-2d. This imbalance in the hospital finances was a constant problem for the committee.

The hospital's income was derived from a number of sources. Patients were expected to contribute a minimum payment of 3s-6d per week and every year the parish church held special services and collections on behalf of the hospital. In July 1893 the amount collected was £14-17-3d which included 12s-6½d collected at Charlton Church. There were also more ambitious fund-raising events.

On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1890 at the suggestion of The Loyal Prince Albert Lodge of Oddfellows, the first Hospital Sunday Demonstration was held. A procession assembled in Back (Church) Street at 1.30pm. Led by the Banner of the Abingdon Lodge of Oddfellows and the band of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Royal Berkshire Regiment, Fawler Brass Band, Wantage Temperance drum and fife band, members of Childrey Benefit Society and others moved into the Market Place. The bands played and a collection was taken among the 5,000 people present. The procession then paraded through the town collecting money en route and arrived at the church for a service at 3.30pm. The procession then reformed and moved down Tanner Street (Priory Road), Portway Place, Foundry Street (Ormond Road), Wallingford Street and back into the Market Place, where a selection of music was played before the parade dismissed. The street and church collection of £40-19s-9½d was handed over to the hospital.

The following year, Grove held a Hospital Sunday with a procession through the village and a Church service, which raised £6-5s. A week later on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1891, the second Hospital Demonstration took place in Wantage. It followed the pattern set the previous year but there were fewer spectators. The amount raised was only £34-12s-8d. Although this was less than the previous year, it was noted that the collection contained 650 more coins! An indication of less affluent times perhaps!

A similar procession took place in September of the next year. But fewer people watched the smaller procession and only £19 was raised for the hospital. In 1893 The Oddfellows at one of their quarterly meetings in the Lodge Room of the Blue Boar decided not to hold a Hospital Sunday parade that year and the Cottage Hospital in Belmont lost a valuable source of revenue.

On Friday afternoon 20<sup>th</sup> November 1896, a large crowd gathered in the Back Street Reading Room for a special presentation. Mrs Curnow, who had been matron of the Cottage Hospital for the previous eight years, was the guest of honour on the occasion of her retirement from nursing. The vicar, the Rev. T H Archer-Houblon, presented Mrs Curnow with an address mounted in an oak and gold frame and with a purse of gold. As a mark of the high regard in which she was held, nearly 200 people had subscribed towards her parting gift.

The Committee appointed Miss Sarah Evans as matron. Miss Evans had extensive nursing experience having worked in hospitals in Wolverhampton, Wigan and Dudley, and had been matron in Frome for the previous four years. The Committee had an arduous task in selecting a new matron as all 65 applicants had excellent testimonials! But Miss Evans resigned after two years and was replaced by Miss A L Dallimore from West Ham Hospital, Stratford. Not long after her appointment as matron, the town nurse, Miss Price, died suddenly of influenza. A cheerful 19-year old girl from Dublin, she had earned the love and esteem of all she had come in contact with.

The appointments committee was in action again in 1902 when they selected Miss Frances Pike as the new matron of the Cottage Hospital. In Miss Pike they found an outstanding matron, who served the hospital and the community for over 25 years.

It was a sad day for all the townsfolk when Lord Wantage died in 1901, A few weeks earlier he had visited the hospital and toured the wards. Fortunately Lady Wantage agreed to replace her husband as President. In 1905 Mr Stephen W Silver, an original subscriber and vice-President, and Mr Llewellyn Jotcham, the honorary secretary, also died. Portraits of all three men were presented to the hospital in acknowledgement of their services.

Although fees were charged the hospital still depended on the hospitality of the neighbourhood for its funding. Donations in cash and gifts in kind were all gratefully received by Matron. In 1896 the Rev. James Macdougall, a former vicar of Hanney, left the hospital trustees £400 in his will. There were annual collections in the local churches for the hospital and, when the fair came to town in September every year, some of the fair operators gave the proceeds of their first evening to the hospital.

One of the gifts which the hospital received in 1897 was a comforter of green wool knitted by Queen Victoria herself. Lady Wantage sent Mr Llewellyn Jotcham, Hon. Sec. of the Hospital Committee, a letter explaining its donation:

*Dec 19, 97*

*Dear Mr Jotcham,*

*At the meeting at Frogmore for arranging the distribution of the work of the Berks. Needlework Guild I asked Princess Beatrice if something worked by the Queen herself could be given to the Wantage Cottage Hospital. I have received this comforter which I am sure Wantage will be proud to possess - will you have it given to the Matron for the use of the patients? It should be carefully preserved and should have a small label attached to it, stating it is the Queen's work.*

*yrs*

*Lady Wantage*

This letter and the comforter in its original box are now part of the Museum's collection of needlework.

Another trustee and member of the family firm of solicitors, Mr Willian C Jotcham, was a frequent visitor to the hospital in the capacity of coroner. At the end of 1900 he held two enquiries and two inquests. Two of the deaths were due to burns! A six-year girl was thought to have been pushed into the kitchen fire while her mother went into the field to pick some potatoes and a two-year old girl had upset a dish of hot gravy over her chest and side. The other deaths were the result of a fractured leg and a fall from a cart. These incidents are typical of the domestic and industrial accidents which were all too common at the turn of the century. In particular, accidents caused by the operating of agricultural machinery and the use of horses and carts sent many casualties to the hospital's door.

In 1904 the Committee drew £50 from its reserve fund to thoroughly renovate the interior of the building and to put in a new bath. The following year a major improvement scheme was started. Matron's sitting-room was converted into a modern operating theatre, with a revolutionary and scientifically constructed operating table, sinks and glass instrument shelves. Matron and her assistant nurse then shared the boardroom, where committee meetings were held occasionally. On the north side of the house, new buildings were erected, including a surgery for out-patients, a store room and two additional wards. The cost was net from the contingency fund.

The extension was opened in July 1906 and the invited guests toured the wards and then enjoyed light refreshments on the front lawn. The opening of the hospital for inspection became an annual event associated with 'Pound Day'. This new source of revenue began in 1906 and was very well-supported, In December 1911 the 'Pound Day' gifts amounted to over 400 lbs including tea, coffee, sugar, rice, sago, tapioca, dried fruit, soda, vegetables, potatoes, macaroni, pickled tongue, apples, pears, jam, marmalade, cornflour, arrowroot and cakes! Some Christmas present!

The alterations and extension to the hospital carried out in 1906 were an unqualified success. Matron Pike and her nurse were as busy as ever and extra help was engaged in the kitchen. Miss Deare of The Ham was helping out as a voluntary nurse and a telephone had been installed. The Vale of White Horse Directory for 1911 lists Miss Sims as the hospital's nurse and in 1915 she was joined by Miss Bygraves.

The Directory of 1911 also names the Committee and I feel that it is worth printing as it shows the involvement of most of the leading families of the town.

President: The Lady Wantage. Vice-President: Mr A K Lloyd  
Committee: Ex-officio Members: Messrs W Marlow & Mr W C Jotcham  
(Trustees of Mr Percy Smith's Bequest)  
Elected Members: the Rev Canon the Hon M J G Ponsonby, Mr J N Arbery,  
Mrs Carter, Mr A S Castle, Mrs Clark, Mr T Clark, Mr C R Clement,  
Mrs Clement, Miss Elliot, Rev F J Gillmor, Mr J W Kent, Mr E Nalder,  
Mr E Ormond, Mrs E B Ormond and Mrs Robson.  
Medical Officers: Mr W M Woodhouse, Mr A Birt & Mr A E Causton  
Consultant Surgeon: Mr J O Sankey of Oxford

The hospital continued to balance its budget with funds raised from church collections, Harvest Festival gifts and the annual Pound Day. There were also individual gifts which varied from eggs to cushions, and from sponge cakes to newspapers. In April 1910 over 200 members of the Hospital Needlework Guild met for afternoon tea in the V C Gallery. Their work was displayed and later presented to Matron when the ladies visited the wards.

During the First World War, people had less money to spare and fundraising was usually undertaken for a number of worthwhile causes at the same time. In March 1916 the proceeds of a concert in the Town Hall were divided between the hospital and the local Red Cross. A Red Cross Hospital for the sick and wounded had been set up in part of St Katharine's School towards the end of 1914. Lord Wantage had started the English Red Cross Society and it is not surprising that Lady Wantage was actively involved in the work of the local branch. She also organised a Convalescent Hospital for Discharged Soldiers at Welford Park, near Newbury. So there were many calls on the available charity in the town and surrounding villages.

One charity, however, was specifically established to aid hospitals. To mark the fiftieth anniversary of her arrival in England, Queen Alexandra started the Alexandra Rose Day. This was the beginning in Britain of the concept of selling emblems in support of charity. She got the idea from a Danish priest who sold roses from his garden in aid of local orphans. Alexandra Roses were made of pink linen by crippled and blind girls in London. The 26<sup>th</sup> June 1912 was the first Alexandra Rose Day in aid of London hospitals. Soon other charities took up the idea and flower and flag days abounded across the country.

The first Alexandra Rose Day was held in Wantage in June 1915. From early morning young ladies in white dresses were busily engaged in selling roses at varying prices in aid of the Cottage Hospital. The venture was so successful that it became an annual event.

In 1919 life began to return to normal after the constraints of wartime. As the soldiers came home, so Wantage businesses began to produce goods for the home market and the shops were able to restock. Much needed maintenance was carried out on many houses and buildings in the town including the Cottage Hospital, which had to find over £220 for the necessary internal and external repairs to the house in Belmont. Although a special appeal brought in £163 and the fees for both ordinary and private patients were increased, the hospital still had a deficit of £90 at the end of 1920.

In the early Twenties, the town was saddened by the death of a number of its most respected residents, who had given valuable service to the community. Lady Wantage died in 1920, having been President of the Hospital Committee since the death of her husband in 1901. She left the Hospital £1000 in her will and was succeeded by Mr A K Lloyd. On his death in 1922, Mr A T Lloyd MP became the President. The Honourable Secretary, Mr W C Jotcham, died in July 1923 and his death was followed six months later by that of Mr J O Sankey, the famous Oxford surgeon, who had been the consulting surgeon to the Wantage Cottage Hospital for over thirty years.

The new committee members continued their valuable work of raising funds through subscriptions, Rose Day collections, the annual 'Pound Day' gifts and also by some new ventures. Early in 1920 the first of the annual hospital balls was held in the V. C. Gallery. The expenses of the 1923 ball were defrayed by private subscriptions and the magnificent sum of £76 was raised. A further £30 was raised by a 'Hospital Week' in the summer, which began with a tennis tournament at Beckett House and included a parade of friendly societies, an open air service and a whist drive. The Hospital Committee also received £49.17s.3d. which was the closing balance of the Belgium Refugee Committee. This money was used to repay capital monies which due to the stress of the times had been used for current expenditure.

The general day-to-day expenses of the hospital were helped by payments from the Radcliffe Infirmary Aid Scheme, which operated in areas served by the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. The subscriptions paid for hospital treatment and the cost of transport to the Radcliffe if necessary. In 1923 Wantage Cottage Hospital received £371 for treating 114 patients under this scheme. This funding was very welcome as the only fixed income was £310 from the endowment. This meant that in 1923 £1063 had to be raised from other sources to cover the hospital's expenses.

In July 1924 a well-attended public meeting was held in the Town Hall to discuss proposals to build a new hospital in Wantage. The chairman, the Rev A George Robinson, explained that the committee was faced with the prospect of spending at least £400 on improvements to the existing building. The Hospital in Belmont had been built as a private house and the stairs were a great drawback. Many years before Lady Wantage had offered to pay for the installation of a lift, but an architect had advised that this would not be practicable. So patients continued to be carried upstairs from the theatre by the local doctors. Many of the young patients remembered this as a special treat. The operating theatre also doubled as an out-patients' room because of the lack of space and cases frequently had to be sent to Oxford due to the shortage of beds in Wantage. On occasions Matron Pike had even given up her bed for a patient!

The Committee therefore proposed that a new hospital should be built in Wantage. They also resolved that the new building should be worthy of the town and must include Children's, Maternity and Out-Patients' wards. The Vicar then went on to explain to the audience that although the venture would be costly, about £10000 was needed, they already had two marvellous offers. Mr A S Castle had offered a plot of land in Ham Road and Mr A T Lloyd had promised £2000. But Mr Lloyd's money was conditional on the Committee raising a further £4000 by the end of the year. The meeting resolved to form an Appeals Committee and issued an appeal to the people of Wantage to raise £4000 by the end of 1924.

Mr A J Kenyon, Wantage's Postmaster, became the Honorary Secretary of the Appeals Committee and he set about this fund-raising task with great enthusiasm. New and well-tried ventures were organised including concerts, dramatic entertainments and collections. The Reverend Mother donated £100 for a 'St. Mary's Home' bed, and the Misses Sawyer also endowed a bed in memory of the late Col. and Mrs Sawyer. Children were asked to help build and equip a children's ward and Miss Atkin of The Priory organised the children's stamp scheme. Children were given special cards on which they fixed the penny stamps they had bought through their schools and were presented later with certificates in appreciation of their money-raising activities.

Mrs Freddie Fox of Letcombe Regis organised two successful balls in the VC in October 1924 and 1925, On both occasions dancing was to the London orchestra of Jack Hylton and the guests included the leading jockeys, Steve Donoghue, Frank Bullock, Bernard Carslake and Freddie Fox. In December 1924, Mrs Birt arranged a concert which included Vladimoff's Russian Balaika Orchestra and concluded with a dramatic sketch 'Jealousy' acted by Mr Sydney Oldham and Miss Kate Vivian.

These and other efforts resulted in well over £4000 being raised before the end of 1924. In fact by January 1925 there was £8000 in the kitty. This included the £2000 from Mr Lloyd and a donation of £500 from Sir Mortimer Singer of Milton Hill, Steventon, who was the eldest son of the American inventor of the sewing machine and was noted for helping local causes. Support for the proposed new Wantage Hospital was also combined with fund-raising for the Faringdon Hospital in 'An Olde English Fayre' held at Stanford-in-the-Vale on July 23, 1925, which was opened by Her Highness Princess Helena Victoria. Two years later the Princess was to return to open the new Wantage Cottage Hospital.

In 1924 the idea that money should be raised locally for a new purpose-built hospital was well received and the procession in July of that year was in aid of the new venture. It followed the usual pattern of a parade from the recreation ground through the streets of Wantage returning to the recreation ground for an open-air service. Meanwhile volunteers collected money from well-wishers.

By the beginning of 1925, the people of Wantage and the surrounding villages had easily raised £8000 towards the building of a new hospital for the community. This meant that Mr A Thomas Loyd's offer of £2000 was secured, as more than an equivalent amount had been raised by the general public.

Mr A S Castle of Home Farm, Charlton, had offered the committee a piece of land in Ham Road. Unfortunately, on closer inspection of the site, it was felt that, although the land had many good points, it would be very expensive to develop. The committee with regret had to decline Mr Castle's generous offer and, after looking at a number of other sites, managed to secure a corner of Charlton Park. Mr Castle gave the appeal £200 in lieu of the

plot of land. These details are recorded in the Hospital's Annual Report for 1924. Many directories, almanacs and newspaper reports state that the new hospital was built on land given by Mr Castle. However, Mrs Joanna Castle has checked the farm diaries and discovered that in 1924 Albert Stone Castle owned land in Ham Road and did donate £200 to the New Hospital Appeal Fund.

Having secured a site, plans were prepared by Messrs J G T West & Son, the Abingdon architects. With Mr E W Jackson as the consulting engineer, a local firm Messrs J Barrett & Sons of Hanney was awarded the construction contract. The work employed mainly local labour: all the joinery for the doors and windows was produced in Hanney and the bricks came from the Abingdon Concrete Brick and Tile Company. An Abingdon monumental mason, Mr Dennis Godfrey made the stone columns by the main entrance and another local firm, Messrs T H Tombs was responsible for the plumbing. The work began early in 1926 but was delayed by the General Strike and an inadequate supply of materials which followed the stoppage.

By October 1926 the children's stamp scheme organised by Miss Adkin had raised over £150. The committee decided to award merit certificates and chose a design by Miss E M Viveash of Ickleton Road, Wantage. A certificate was awarded to Coralie Mayo and is now in the possession of the museum, as is the original printing block.

Money continued to come into the appeal fund from many and various sources. Mr Alfred Beesly of Letcombe Bowers sent a consignment of freshly-killed rabbits to be sold by auction in the produce market in Wantage Square with the proceeds going into the kitty. Mrs Jotcham gave £100 to name a bed after her late husband, who had for many years been secretary to the Cottage Hospital. Ardington and Lockinge Sports Club sent in £20, which was part of the profits from a sports meeting in Lockinge Park an August Bank Holiday Monday. A sale of 'Bricks' for the New Hospital raised £11 and carol singing by employees of the Challow Iron Works a further £8.

As completion day drew near an urgent appeal was broadcast for furnishing and equipping the hospital - wireless headphones, blankets, fracture beds and a theatre trolley were among the items urgently needed. The magnificent sum of £240 was raised by a three day Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The needlework and handicrafts, cookery and farm produce, and amateur photography were all displayed in new building a month before the hospital opened.

The official opening ceremony took place on Thursday June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1927 outside the main entrance, where crowds of local people from Wantage and the neighbouring villages were gathered. A guard of honour was provided by Boy Scouts (16<sup>th</sup> Ardington and Lockinge under Scoutmaster G Tuckey), the Girl Guides (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wantage, West and East Hendred, Ardington and Lockinge, and Grove and West Hendred Brownies) plus the V.A.D. under their Commandant, Miss Deare.

The Ardington and Lockinge Band played the National Anthem as Her Highness Princess Helena Victoria, the third daughter of Queen Victoria, arrived from Lockinge House, where she had lunched. She was accompanied by Mr and Mrs A T Loyd, Major Ralph Glyn MP and Mrs Glyn. Her Highness was welcomed by Messrs E K W Nalder (chairman) and A L Fullalove (clerk) of the Urban District Council and other dignitaries.

Mr A Thomas Loyd (President of the Hospital) then gave a short address in which he thanked the Princess for honouring them by coming to perform the opening ceremony and for her interest in the project which had been so obvious two years earlier, when she had

attended a fete at Stanford in the Vale in aid of the hospital appeal. He liked to think that the Princess and her family had a particular interest in Wantage, as there were in the town the Prince Christian Victor Memorial Homes for disabled men of Berkshire birth and Berkshire service. He then gave a brief resume of the scheme and announced that the people of Wantage and the surrounding villages had raised the grand total of £12,900 during the three years of the appeal. This was only £2,200 short of the estimated cost of the building, but there was also the cost of furnishing and equipping the hospital. The committee had therefore decided to continue their fund-raising to clear the remaining balance and to use the proceeds from the sale of the old hospital building in Belmont to pay for the necessary furnishings.

The dedication ceremony then opened with the hymn 'Thine Arm, O Lord, in days of old', the singing being led by a choir accompanied by the Kingston Lisle Band. The Bishop of Oxford led the Lord's Prayer and said the dedicatory prayers, after which Her Highness was handed a gilt key, bearing the inscription 'Wantage Hospital, June 30, 1927' with which she unlocked the main door and declared the hospital open. The hymn 'Now thank we all our God' was followed by a prayer and the blessing by the Bishop of Oxford.

Her Highness then received the purses from the following villages: East Challow (Miss Walker), West Challow (Mary Hammersley), Childrey (Peggy Froude), Charlton (Nancy Evans), Chaddleworth (Gladys Boreham), Fawley (Cecily Nichols), Grove (Lois Dance), East Hendred (G Neale), West Hendred (S Watson), East and West Hanney (Margaret Noon), Kingston Lisle (Nellie Jones), Ardington and Lockinge (W Roberts), Letcombe Regis (Miss Griffiths), Letcombe Bassett (Miss Froude), Sparsholt (Miss Maloney), St. Katharine School, Wantage (Kathleen Griffin), Wantage (Miss D Barnard) and Stanford in the Vale (Mr Kenyon). The latter purse representing the proceeds of the sale of a book, 'The Idol of the Vale', written by the late Rev Aldrych Cotton, Vicar of Standford, containing a record of H H's visit to Stanford in 1925, as his personal effort to help the fund.

Princess Helena Victoria was then presented with a very handsome bouquet by little Miss Saunder Davies, of Framland Lodge, Wantage. Her Highness thanked everyone for the warm welcome they had given her and said how pleased she was to be among them. She well remembered visiting the fete and being shown the site where the new hospital was to be built. She congratulated them all on the results of their great efforts to collect the money and trusted that, as Mr Loyd had said, in future the money would be forthcoming to maintain the hospital and to enable it to complete the work the founders envisaged - that was to serve the sick and suffering of the whole of the neighbourhood. She was delighted to have seen so many present and to have received the purses on behalf of the hospital.

Mr Loyd called for three hearty cheers for the Princess, who was then introduced to the hospital committee and taken on a conducted tour of the building. The new Wantage Cottage Hospital claimed to be the most efficiently-equipped and up-to-date in the area. The accommodation consisted of Men's General Ward (6 beds), Men's Private Ward (2 beds), Women's General Ward (6 beds), Women's Private Ward (2 beds), Maternity Ward (2 beds) and a Children's Ward of 4 Beds which had been tastefully decorated by Mrs Bond of Grove. This was a great improvement on the Belmont building which had only twelve beds and two cots. All the wards had electric lighting and wireless fittings, and the corridors had cork floor tiles to lessen the noise. Mosaic terazzo was used for the floors of the laboratory and operating theatre, so that they would be easy to clean. There were also offices for the matron and the secretary, and a doctor's room plus accommodation for the nurses.



After the official party had completed their tour of the building, the general public was allowed access to the wards. Refreshments were served in a marquee, which had been erected on the lawn, and at 4.25pm Her Highness left for Didcot Station.

The day had been a very profitable one for the committee, for a total of £542-11-3 was collected, mainly from the purses:-

Purses presented by the villages and Wantage	£472- 16-8 d
Programmes autographed by the Princess	£ 5- 0-0 d
Sale of programmes	£ 5-17-3½d
Sale of posies given by Mrs A J Mayo	£ 1- 4-0½d
Collection boxes	£ 15- 0-1 d
Donations received at the hospital	£ 32- 9-2 d
Donations for furnishings and equipment	£ 10- 0-0 d
Car park	4-0 d

The first inmate of the hospital arrived on the opening day as a patient and not as he expected as a guest. The Rev Alfred Phillips had preached his farewell sermons to large congregations in the Baptist Church on the previous Sunday and had received a public presentation on the Monday. Both his family and furniture had already moved to Herne Bay, where Mr Phillips intended to spend his retirement. He had remained behind in order to attend the opening ceremony of the new hospital, having been an enthusiastic and valued member of the committee. Mr Phillips stayed overnight at 'The Elms' in Grove Street as the guest of Mr P S Clarke. On the Thursday, he crossed the road in front of two cyclists and a car, but was unable to reach the pavement before the car struck him. He was carried unconscious into 'The Elms', where he received medical attention for a fractured top left rib, a smashed jaw and head injuries. He was admitted to the hospital in the evening and was poorly for some time. He was joined on the Saturday by the second patient, another road casualty. Mr Edward Goodenough, a moulder of Queen's Row, Grove Street, was knocked off his bicycle when in collision with a car being driven out of the Motor Company's garage.

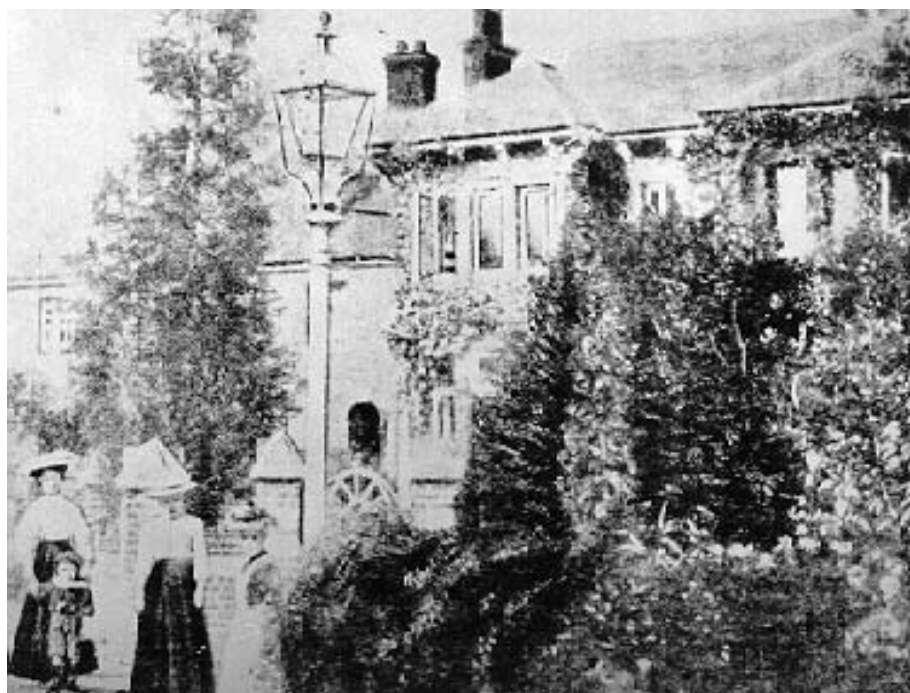
Matron Pike and her team of nurses were soon making full use of the new facilities available to them, after their move from the Belmont building. In October 1927, Matron Pike was herself the centre of attention, when a silver-plated tea-tray and tea-service were presented to her on completion of twenty-five years service as matron of the Wantage Cottage Hospital. She continued in that post until the late 1930s.

The Cottage Hospital premises in Belmont, which had opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 1886, were no longer needed and were taken over by the Rural District Council as their offices.

After the local government reorganisation of 1972, the Belmont building was converted into flats.



Wantage Cottage Hospital - Belmont - 1905 - front view from street.  
[like bld023-4] [See: Hancock 'Wantage' p83] (bld027.jpg)



Wantage Cottage Hospital - Belmont - c1910 - 2 women and 5 children in front, with gas lamp-post. The hospital was founded in the 1890s on a bequest from Penny Smith of Letcombe - it remained the hospital until 1928, when it became the RDC Offices, until made redundant in 1974 and converted into 4 maisonettes.  
Mr Abe Dance, an OAP in the 1940s, remembered a corrugated iron structure as the isolation hospital on Windmill Hill. (bld021.jpg)



Wantage Cottage Hospital - Belmont - c1910 - front view. (bld023.jpg)



Wantage Cottage Hospital - Belmont - c1910 - three nurses on front steps. (bld024.jpg)



Wantage Cottage Hospital - Belmont - c1910 - matron and nurses in garden - Matron Miss Pike and Sister Bygraves seated, and 3 nurses standing. (ppl009.jpg)

This article was reproduced from "The Blowing Stone" Spring 1986 - Autumn 1987.

The Vale and Downland Museum is a registered charity (No. 270466) which aims to preserve and provide information and objects relating to the Vale and Downland area, Wantage, Oxfordshire. The Museum encourages access to historical records for non-profit making purposes. This article may be used for such purposes, however the information must not be edited or reproduced for commercial purposes without prior written permission.

Vale and Downland Museum Trust, 19 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 8BL  
Telephone: 01235 771447 e-mail: [museum@wantage.com](mailto:museum@wantage.com)