

WASC 2108

Senr. Medical  
Officers Report  
incl. Personnel Nos.  
June 1916 - Mar 1917

SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

ROYAL SMALL ARMS FACTORY, ~~Ø~~

1st March 1917.

S.W.S.

The total strength of R+S+A+F, prior to August 1914 was 1845, the present day strength 9789; which figure included 1208 female workers.

The total number of males examined as to fitness for employment between 1. 8. 1914 and 1. 3. 1917 was 14, 779.

The approximate total men placed on Sick List during 1916 was 12,065 (factory) and to these figures must be added 1,617 of the Army Inspection Department giving a final figure of 13,682.

The Injury List for the same year which included all degrees totalled 1,991.

The average number of attendances made at the Surgery during each period of 24 hours was 147 and it is estimated that at least 1,370 attendances were made in addition by A. O. C. men under instruction.

STAFF.

Up to May 1st 1916 the staff consisted of Medical Officer in charge, a Dispenser and Dresser (ex R.A.M.C.) an Orderly and an untrained Clerk. A night nurse was engaged in 1915 and greatly to her credit has remained at her post up to the date of this report.

At first the class of physical fitness of the new entrants was good but has progressively deteriorated until at the present time a worker has to be accepted if he can "stand up".

No prospective worker has been accepted with any form of disability which could be alleviated or made good; for instance all forms of Hernia have been fitted with satisfactory trusses. Defective Vision has been corrected at the Ophthalmic Hospitals. Varicose Veins have been supported by Elastic Webb Bandages or Elastic Stockings. Flat feet by Valgus socks. Joint troubles by suitable appliances. Hydroceles by operation and Varicoceles by Suspensory bandages.

Suitable occupation has been found for men suffering from

various forms of Heavy<sup>C</sup> Disease, either in the Inspection Department or at light machine work with short hours and avoidance of night work.

Similarly Soldiers and Sailors broken in the War and others with deformity of limbs have been accorded preferential treatment.

A "Cripples List" is kept, and the men thereon are passed to and from work at such times as will ensure their safety from injuries during any crush.

Careful watch has been made for any Infectious illness and the various forms of Contagious skin eruptions have been segregated.

#### DIFFICULTIES.

The chief difficulty has been the inadequate accommodation at the Surgery for dealing with so many new hands. The waiting room was never large enough, and on occasions when over 100 men present themselves at 7 a.m. when coming "off" the Sick List, recourse has been made to the dining-hall to furnish them with their resumption tickets.

#### SANOID DRESSINGS.

It was found that the old first aid boxes "Red Cross", which were placed in each Shop, rarely remained ready filled, and the dressings therein were anything but aseptic. A complete Sanoid Dressings Box with types of dressings for all forms of injuries and burns, each dressing sterile and fastened in a sterile packet were obtained at considerable cost and placed in every shop in the Factory.

This innovation necessitated the enlargement of the Medical Stores because a considerable stock had to be maintained to replace daily consumption.

#### LOSS OF PRODUCTION.

All men present themselves at the Surgery either at 7 a.m. or 6 p.m. to receive their "return to work passes" when coming off the Sick List, it is frequently an hour before the last man is passed in, it would appear that some system could be devised to obviate this long wait, the man himself loses pay and the department his production.

#### INJURIES.

To check the increasing tendency to remain on the Injury List daily records are kept of all actual attendances and a specific date

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TRANSPORT OF SICK AND INJURED.

The sole means of transport consists of an antiquated horse drawn Ambulance, the horse itself having passed its best days. The occasions upon which men suddenly taken ill at night requiring to be speedily conveyed home are frequent, distances are great and no trams are running. Injuries, also to be admitted to the Sandhurst Hospital, R.G.P.F., Waltham Abbey a distance of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles suffer unnecessary delay, loss of blood as well as shock. A two litter Motor Ambulance should be available at all times.

CLERICAL WORK.

By the death of my Clerk who was also a qualified Dispenser very considerable inconvenience was occasioned, the terms in use and the technicalities inseparable from a Medical Department cannot be picked up under several months and the several individuals sent to replace him proved wholly unsuited for the work. Card records papers and memos etc lapsed into a chaotic condition, and it is only during the last few months, back work has been picked up and daily routine proceeds normally. My present Clerk, Mr Parson, has particular Merit and is exceptionally suited for the work in hand.

I am of opinion that an understudy for each person employed in the Medical Department should be obtainable since any one of the staff falling sick, immediately dislocated the work of the others, and moreover the Medical Department is the most important branch of the Factory.

The duties of the Medical Officer of the Factory with special reference to his training and experience and his actual practice as a Physician and Surgeon therein are very materially curtailed by the hours spent in Clerical Work. The necessary reports in cases for

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cases for compensation, as to fitness for particular kinds of employment or occupation diseases, Sanitation and such like are not only interesting but inseparable from his duty, but the thousand and one record signatures in duplicate etc, etc, relegate the M.O. to the position of a 3rd class Writer. Some relief should be obtainable from this Secretarial work and more time would be available for the practice of the Profession.

O.P. RULES.

With regard to those relating to sickness and Injuries the opinion is expressed that they should be rigidly enforced, the practice of falsifying dates is common and the excuse of attending a F.M.P. when on the Injury List to gain time "off" is a frequent occurrence.

It would appear that no difficulty is experienced in obtaining any form of Certificate covering "unable to perform night work", "unfit for his present employment", Release recommended by reason of environment", "Insomnia", "Domestic Grounds" and in one instance a certificate was produced stating that the workman was suffering from a Disease of Occupation contracted within the Factory when no such operation had ever been undertaken therein. It is understood that the cost of these certificates varies from 6d to 5/-.

NEW HOSPITAL.

An eight bed Hospital extension is nearing completion for Women workers situated immediately contiguous to the Sandhurst Hospital and should be available for occupation within a month.

A. M. O.

Dr Alice M. Burn was appointed Assistant Medical Officer and commenced duty on 1.5.1916, having the medical supervision of the women workers at Enfield and Waltham. Unfortunately Dr Burn's help cannot be counted upon on the male side in time of stress, because prejudice exists among the men to being attended by a Lady Doctor.

WHOLE TIME EMPLOYMENT.

The Senior Medical Officer has been on duty continuously by night and day since the commencement of the War, the working of three shifts of eight hours obviously preventing any respite from duty during the week of seven days. No vacation with pay is allowed and no substitute is provided in the event of sickness.

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Although the work carried out has been phenomenal and is still increasing it has been carried <sup>through</sup> with expedition and without friction.

This report is intended to convey a truthful impression of the working of the Medical Department at the S. S. A. F. with its attendant suggestions for improvement and should in no sense be misconstrued as a statement bearing the mark of dissatisfaction.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant.

*Damer Preece*

Senior Medical Officer  
Waltham & Enfield Factories.

Col: F. T. Fisher, R. A. C. E.

S. W. E.

Appendix "A"

Report of A.M.O. on Woman's Department.

APPENDIX TO S. M. O's. REPORT TO S. W. B.

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Royal Small Arms Factory.

Number of women taken on during past 12 months -  
1200.

Accommodation.

During first month - Nil. Medical Examination of Workers conducted behind a screen in passage way of Old Recreation Hall, in use as a temporary Canteen. Subsequently, one room partially partitioned off from main building, served as office, surgery and examination room. Here, for five months, the work of the Women's Medical Department was carried on, without artificial light, water or heat, except, such as the adjacent Canteen afforded. During this period, neither Night nor Day nurse could be installed, the A. M. O. doing nurse's duty by day and the night nurse at the Man's Surgery attending to Night Shifts.

About the middle of September, the Department moved into the new buildings, consisting of waiting room, small surgery and office. A day nurse was now in attendance but owing to the fact that there was no provision for heat or sterile water, a night nurse could not be obtained till about the middle of December. Since then, we have had a night and day nurse in constant attendance and the equipment since the New Year has been adequate.

The disabilities associated with the grossly unhygienic accommodation of practically eight months of 1916 plus inadequate equipment are too obvious to need further comment.

The work of the Department has, so far, comprised only the Medical Examination of prospective Women Workers and the treatment of such injuries as arise in the course of their employment. So far, no arrangement has been made for the

medical/

Medical welfare of the women in the matter of educative addresses on the principles of health and physical fitness. There is no co-operation between the Women's Medical Department and the Women's Welfare Department. Questions of work, diet and general hygiene are never discussed with the A. M. O. Personal observation and contact with the workers, leads me to believe that there is a considerable leakage of energy and loss of working power due, especially among the younger women, to ignorance of health habits and elementary hygiene. The problem of inadequate sleep is one of the most pressing, especially with workers who travel long distances.

In the retrospect, much effort has been wasted and small results obtained owing to adverse conditions of accommodation and staffing. Two thirds of a Medical Officer's time is absorbed in clerical work and supervision; check records have been multiplied till an A. M. O.'s duties have resolved themselves into that of a "Medical Policeman".

#### Royal Gunpowder Factory.

Number of women taken on during past 10 months -  
1600.

#### Accommodation.

For seven months the Men's Surgery was placed at the disposal of the A. M. O. for certain hours each afternoon, where the examination of women was carried on in comparative comfort. The Men's Hospital and nursing staff was also made available for the treatment of injuries.

Since October, new women's offices were opened at Quinton Hill and as soon as light and heat were installed, a night and day nurse were placed in charge of the Surgery. The attendances here include men and boys as well as women, and many trying, as well as humorous circumstances arise in our efforts to secure adequate privacy. With the opening of the new Women's Surgery at Refinery Gate, some of these difficulties will be

obviated/



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obviated as all the Medical Examinations will be conducted there.

The twelve hours unbroken duty, seven days a week, combined with uncomfortable housing conditions, has taxed the physical resources of the Nurses in charge at Quinton Hill. I have so far not succeeded in getting one to stay more than a matter of eight weeks. As it takes a nurse several weeks to conduct the Surgery with judgement, accuracy and tact, frequent changes like this, militate against efficiency and requires increased supervision.

The Women's Hospital is still in the process of erection. With nearly 3000 women employees nothing but phenomenal luck has carried us through! No serious physical results to the women have followed the various explosions - a brief rest being sufficient, prior to despatching them to their various homes. Only in one case was prolonged treatment required and that had to be carried out at the girl's lodgings. Cases of sprains, crushes and other injuries to feet and legs have presented a difficulty. So far, we have managed to send all cases home in care of a matron or police woman and where the woman has not been able to return for dressings - local doctors have given the necessary attention.

There is the closest co-operation between the Women's Medical Department and the Women's Welfare Department of the Royal Gunpowder Factory and there is much promise of useful educative work. Here, too, accomodation difficulties and the widely scattered nature of the Women's quarters has retarded development of our welfare schemes.

The Surgery at the Royal Small Arms Factory is 4 miles away from Quinton Hill and 3 from Refinery Gate. Difficulties of transport led to much loss of time and energy during the months when no arrangements were made for conveyance.

With regard to the work of the Department generally.

Ky/

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My chief disappointment lies in the waste of professional training, knowledge and energy caused by the non-medical duties of the post. At a National crisis like the present, when our best efforts are wanted, I have yet to be convinced that this is "inseparable from the administration of large departments", a quotation which has been made to do duty for the more obvious explanation.

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