

British Hospitals for Mothers and Babies

Woolwich, Kent, England

(By Sister Kirkpatrick).

It may be of interest to nurses taking a training in New Zealand midwifery schools to know something of the hospital which has frequently been referred to me as the most up-to-date midwifery hospital using the most scientific methods in regard to both mother and babe in England.

I refer to the above, which had its origin twenty years ago in a house not specially designed for the purpose, and fruited three years ago in a modern building carefully planned to meet the most exacting demands of public health and hygiene. Hospitals sometimes grow in a haphazard way to meet the needs of the community, but more ideally they eventuate as entirely new buildings calculated to meet all requirements.

To get this, one must have great foresight, enormous confidence, unbounding enthusiasm and ideals of so fine a quality that no personal sacrifice is too great to be made.

Of such stuff the three people who sponsored this great piece of work are made. They are: Mrs. Parnell, Matron; Miss Gregory, Honorary Treasurer and head of district work; Miss Cashmore, Sister Superintendent.

During eight years of district midwifery work in the country, Miss Gregory realised the necessity of a training school specially dedicated to the needs of educated women who proposed to devote themselves to this work. She therefore set herself to collect the necessary funds, and with her two friends, Mrs. Parnell and Miss Cashmore, opened the home for Mothers and Babies in an adapted house in Wood Street.

In 1915 the home amalgamated with the oldest maternity in London, the British Lying-in Hospital, Endell Street, which had been obliged to close owing to the inadequacy of its buildings. Later on a large piece of waste land was secured, and the building of which I make a rough diagram was completed in 1921.

It consists of three stories all connected by lift, and having a very delightful roof on top with a view of the Thames. The wards are on the first two stories, two on each flat, each having eight beds, but capable of taking at least one more. Altogether 34 in the main building and an additional six in the annex.

The windows are large, and open low. On one side they look over the mothers' garden, which has been designed with much loving care and a very good idea of artistic arrangement.

The walls of the ward are palest cream, and the floor covered with thick dark green floorcloth, which effectively deadens sound and satisfies one's aesthetic side rather more than severe boards.

The screens are made of charming floral stuff, and match or contrast prettily with the counterpanes.

The lockers are of white enamelled metal with glass tops, easily kept very hygienic and having rubber wheels are easily and soundlessly moved.

Each ward is provided with a little room fitted up with elbow taps and porcelain basins, which are used for the preparation of hands, etc., when the nurses are giving treatments.

Branching out is the corridor with accessory rooms. On one side, screen, cupboard, Sister's room, kitchen, side ward and nursery. On the other, linen cupboard, sink and basin rooms, and labour theatre, the latter being very up-to-date with good lighting and an excellent hot and cold water steriliser, so necessary where an antiseptic system is used.

The nursery is particularly charming, with delightful baths for the babies, and opens on to a big verandah overlooking a very promising orchard. At the end of the corridor is a potential welfare centre, in use at present for kitchen, etc., until sufficient money is obtained