

## Before the Museum Came to 10a North Street

**T**his is the second of two contributions by Mrs Phyllis Farnham, who used to live with her family at 10a North Street, where the Museum now is, shortly after WW2 when the building was used as accommodation for employees of Havant and Waterloo UDC. This article was compiled just before Phyllis and her husband left Emsworth last year.

### The Red Cross in Emsworth

On the north side of the yard facing the hospital was a hall, used mainly as the Emsworth County Library. When the library was closed other groups could use the hall, such as the British Red Cross. I could see their members gathering from my kitchen window (where the Museum's Administrator's office is now) and resolved to join them.

The County Commandants at Winchester Headquarters were Miss Balfour and Miss Pilkington, two lovely ladies. Mrs. Street, wife of Peter Street of Street's Ironmongers, was the Havant Area Commandant and Miss Brambley (a chiropodist) was Commandant of Emsworth Detachment.

The main courses that were taught were First Aid and Home Nursing. Our tutors were professional nurses; Sister Turnbull and Sister Franklyn were regular tutors who gave a lot of their time to teach us. Dr. Barnard was usually the doctor who came to examine us at the end of the course. These courses were repeated and updated every year, and after three years of successful passes, we were given a medal to wear.

During this time I also passed the test to drive the ambulance. The examiner was a Major Harris, an ex-Royal Marine who was the Road Safety Officer for South East Hampshire. The ambulance was given to Emsworth Red Cross by a Miss Stella Lyons, a very generous VAD in the Red Cross. She also gave the Red Cross hut to Emsworth. It was built in Emsworth House Close – lately pulled down and replaced by a block of flats I believe. And Miss Lyons also gave a Red Cross hut to Havant. That was situated in the road behind the old Cinema – both no longer in existence.

During the summer months I would drive the ambulance and a contingent of Red Cross nurses down to the Red Cross Station on Hayling Island beach front. Our main casualties were cut feet from glass in the sand, insect stings, sunburn and lost children — occasionally a child with a sprained ankle or broken arm. In the height of the season it could take two hours to get off the Island, so we always hoped for nothing too serious.

We also took the ambulance to Farnborough Air Show – usually our Field Hospital Test was amongst the crowd, and again the usual minor injuries and lost children, but one year we were down at the end of the runway, in case of an emergency crash! Fortunately nobody did crash their plane!!

Later I joined the NHSR – the National Hospital Service Reserve. This was a group organised in the event of an atom bomb dropping on Portsmouth during the 'Cold War'. The training for this was much more intensive, involving attending lectures at St. Mary's, the Royal and Queen Alexandra's Hospital. Also one had to do regular hours practical work in hospital – voluntarily, of course. Your hours were checked and signed by Matron. In the big hospitals, on a ward it could be entirely women's medical or men's surgical etc., but in Emsworth hospital when it was fully operational one had a great variety of complaints and illnesses and much more interesting work. Emsworth Hospital had its own operating theatre and one could, and did, attend operations. The idea of the Service was that if an atom bomb dropped on Portsmouth, the 'fall out' flowed with the prevailing wind, so therefore the Field Hospitals were located in

the New Forest area, well away from any 'fall out'. A group of nurses and a doctor would be sent to each Tented Hospital. We learned all we could from the very concentrated course of special nursing but fortunately for us, and everyone else, we never had to use that knowledge.

I was also Cadet Officer and had a lovely group of local girls, Susan Lain of Lain's Antique shop and her friend Ann Gilbert, Sandra Ellis from Ellis Nurseries, Barbara Millington and Maureen Stone, all from Westbourne. About twenty girls in all. Their uniform was adapted from the school uniform, i.e., navy or grey skirt with white blouse, beret with badge and an arm band when marching in a parade. I usually suggested a white woolly jumper under the blouse, rather than a coat on top, and they always looked very smart. We, in the Nursing Contingent, had to buy our own uniforms. This consisted of a blue working dress with cap and starched apron and cuffs and black shoes. For special parades we had a red dress with again the starched apron, cuffs and cap. There was also a coat and skirt costume, and overcoat and a hat or beret. We also always carried a shoulder bag filled with necessary first aid equipment. Looking back I have very fond memories of my time in the Emsworth Red Cross.

*Phyllis Farnham*