

Red Cross Hospital

King Edward Hall, Lindfield



King Edward Hall c1912. Lindfield Parish Council Village Archive

By Richard Bryant

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Introduction

Following the reform of the Army in 1908, the War Office¹ issued its 'Scheme for the Organisation of Voluntary Aid' as it recognised that in the event of a major European war existing medical arrangements would be wholly inadequate for the care of the returned wounded. In response the Red Cross began to establish Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) to recruit and train local volunteers for the task. There were separate detachments for women and men with each having an organisational structure led by a Commandant.

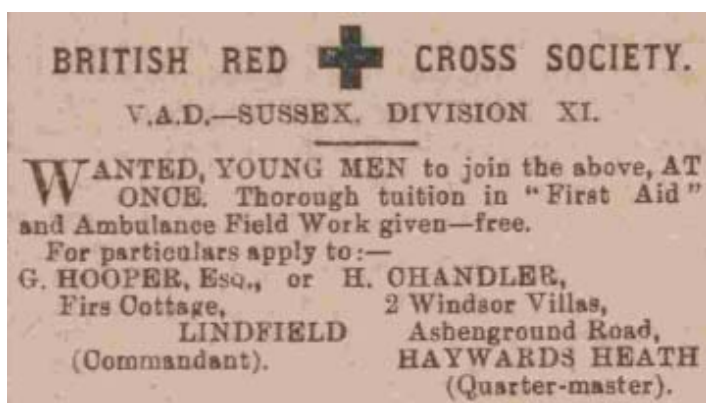
Sussex 150 Women's Detachment

Established in March 1912 under Mrs Florence Hooper² as Commandant the detachment was not operational until required by the war. Women were recruited from Lindfield and trained at Cuckfield Hospital³ to enable them to pass proficiency examinations and become full members of the VAD⁴.

When war was declared the Detachment was mobilised, in addition to the Commandant there was a Quartermaster, Lady Superintendent [a paid qualified nurse] 20 VAD nurses, cooks, etc and a Medical Officer⁵ in accordance with the laid down requirements. Work started to prepare and equip King Edward Hall as a Red Cross Hospital⁶.

Sussex 11 Men's Detachment

Men's detachments had a structure based on 56 volunteers⁷. This Detachment⁸ was formed in Lindfield in March 1912 with Mr Godfrey Hooper as Commandant. An advertisement for male recruits to strengthen the Men's Detachment was published in the Mid Sussex Times on 4 August 1914.⁹



Mid Sussex Times, 4 August 1914 p 4

Sussex 11 was mobilised on 20 November 1914¹⁰ and the men served Lindfield and Haywards Heath Red Cross Hospitals acting mainly as orderlies.

It would appear that the Detachment never achieved its full complement of volunteers, as Mr Hooper indicated that in 1917 the 35 registered members were

serving as follows: seven night orderlies and one day orderly at Lindfield, one orderly at Haywards Heath Red Cross Hospital, two orderlies at Red Cross Hospital Netley, 19 serving in the Army, two working in munitions and 3 unable to help¹¹.

Lindfield Red Cross Hospital

When mobilised the Sussex 150 Women's Detachment prepared to establish the Red Cross Hospital [also commonly known as a VAD hospital]. It was an Auxiliary War Hospital attached to a military hospital and thus the patients looked after remained under military control¹². It was one of over 3000 auxiliary hospitals administered by the Red Cross and typical of such hospitals across Sussex and the country.

The Hospital was situated on the ground floor of King Edward Hall, this had been the village hall since opening in January 1911.

Shortly after the outbreak of war an appeal was made for bedding, clothing, equipment and money for the hospital¹³. The response was immediate and generous from Lindfield residents and businesses; a trait that continued throughout the war as local financial and other support was an ongoing need. Without local support the hospital could not have survived financially as the daily allowance per patient of 2s paid by the War Office¹⁴ was less than it cost to care for a patient. Although subsequently increased to 3s and for 1918 to 3s 3d it was always insufficient to meet patient cost.

To assist in equipping the Hall for use as a hospital the Haywards Heath Gas Company supplied free of charge large cookers and a geyser for hot water¹⁵.

The hospital opened its doors¹⁶ on 3 November 1914 and immediately received its first intake of 13 Belgian wounded soldiers¹⁷, suffering with bullet and shrapnel wounds, with seven more being admitted a few days later. The ward situated in the main hall had 20 beds, this increased to 24 and then 26 by 1918¹⁸. The patient's nationality shifted to mainly British soldiers as the war progressed. In 1917 six beds were reserved for those who had lost limbs, in July 1917 all beds were occupied¹⁹.



Patients and nurses in the ward at King Edward Hall. It is believed this photograph was taken by W. Marchant and used to raise money for hospital funds. Lindfield Parish Council Village Archive.

When the soldiers were fit enough to leave the ward on a fine day they would sit outside King Edward Hall under an awning and enjoy the view across the Pond²⁰ and chat to passers-by.



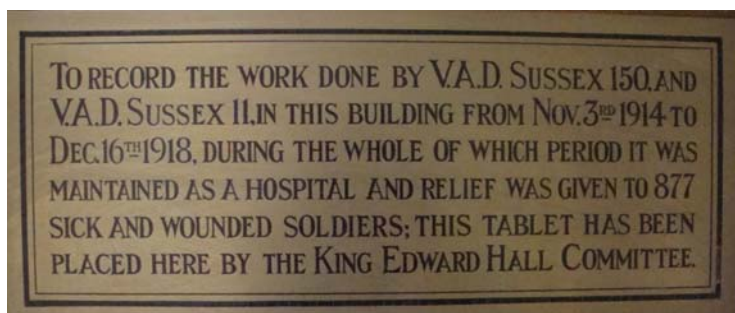
Patients enjoying the view. Lindfield Parish Council Village Archive



King Edward Hall and the Pond. Lindfield History Project Group

By 1917 the facilities provided by the village hall were increasing inadequate and to address the demands of a busy hospital an extension funded largely by public subscription was built.²¹ Described as a permanent asset, it was designed by Mr W Tower and constructed by Norman & Burt of Burgess Hill. The extension to the rear of the hall contained a scullery, nurses' cloakroom, two extra baths and an additional small room for patients. Completed in July 1917²², the total cost²³ was £286 13s with £185 7s 10d coming from the public and the balance from Red Cross hospital funds.

Following the Armistice the hospital closed on 16 December 1918, having treated over 870 wounded soldiers.



Plaque in King Edward Hall. Richard Bryant

Hospital Personnel

On opening in November 1914 the personnel²⁴ at the Hospital were:

Commandant – Mrs Florence Hooper of Firs Cottage, Lindfield.

Medical Officer – Dr Child [a village doctor]

Lady Superintendent – Miss Simpson [Ward Sister]

Quartermaster – Miss Leslie

Superintendent Cook – Miss Scott

VAD Nurses – Mrs Crosbie, Mrs Helme, Miss M Adams, Miss M A Adams, Miss H Catt, Miss J Fitzmaurice, Miss F Humphrey, Miss A Johnstone-Smith, Miss Pestell, Miss S Speer, Miss V Stilwell.

Other Helpers – Miss Alban, Miss Abbott, Mrs Barker, Mrs Bagley, Mrs Cattley, Miss O'Callaghan, Miss J Dickenson, Miss Hill, Miss Knight, Mrs Marchant, Miss L Stilwell and Madame Ludiaux.

Statistics Clerk – Miss G Pennethorne

Asst Clerk – Mrs N Whittall

Auditor – Mr G Hooper

Additionally Mrs Dudley Sampson as the Red Cross Local Secretary held the position of Hon. Commandant.

All were unpaid volunteers except the positions of Lady Superintendent, Medical Officer and other qualified nurses employed at Lindfield by the Red Cross, these included²⁵:

Laura Williams, nee Miller, Ward Sister, 11 April 1917 – 1 December 1917

Mabel Pinco, Nurse Masseur, 4 January 1918 – 29 November 1918

Violet Tanner, Staff Nurse, 22 May 1918 – 21 December 1918

The above nurses were not local women and had served at several hospitals across England before and during the war. The senior nurses pay was £1 1s a week and qualified nurses 15s 5d a week.

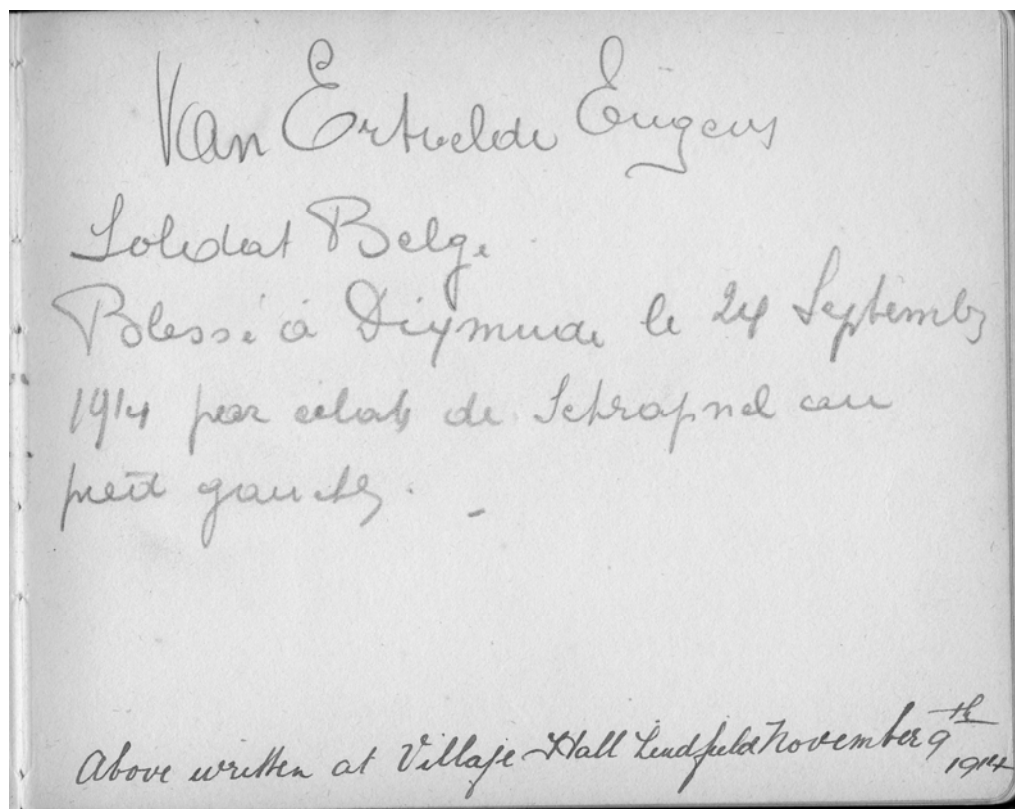
The records for one Lindfield volunteer are held in the British Red Cross Archive, that is in the name of 'Jean' Fitzmaurice²⁶. However her correct name is Jane Fitzmaurice, the daughter of Dr Richard Fitzmaurice, Everyndens, High Street, Lindfield. She enrolled in the VAD in January 1913 and served at the hospital from November 1914 to December 1915 when she moved with her family to Littlehampton. Jane Fitzmaurice was awarded the British Red Cross War Medal in recognition of having completed 1750 unpaid hours; the medal was awarded to volunteers with over 1000 hours service.

Mrs Florence Hooper, served as Commandant throughout the war and received the MBE for her service and in recognition of her caring for the wounded Belgian soldiers she was decorated with the Belgian Order of the Palms of the Crown²⁷.

The Patients

Apart from a few names, virtually nothing is known about the individuals who were patients.

Initially all the patients were wounded Belgian soldiers and their presence in the village so early in the war must have seemed strange. They were treated as minor 'celebrities' and even had their autographs collected²⁸.



Autograph of a Belgian soldier collected on 9 November 1914 by Florence Markwick, daughter of the Headmaster of Lindfield School. Lindfield History Project Group

Gradually the Belgians were replaced by British soldiers as the war progressed. In June 1915 there were three Belgium and 21 English and Scottish soldiers²⁹. At one time there was even an Australian soldier³⁰. Most were suffering from trauma wounds and sent to Lindfield to convalesce following treatment in a military hospital. In August 1917 there were six patients who had lost limbs.

The British soldiers wore the distinctive blue jacket and trousers with a white shirt and red tie uniform of wounded servicemen.³¹

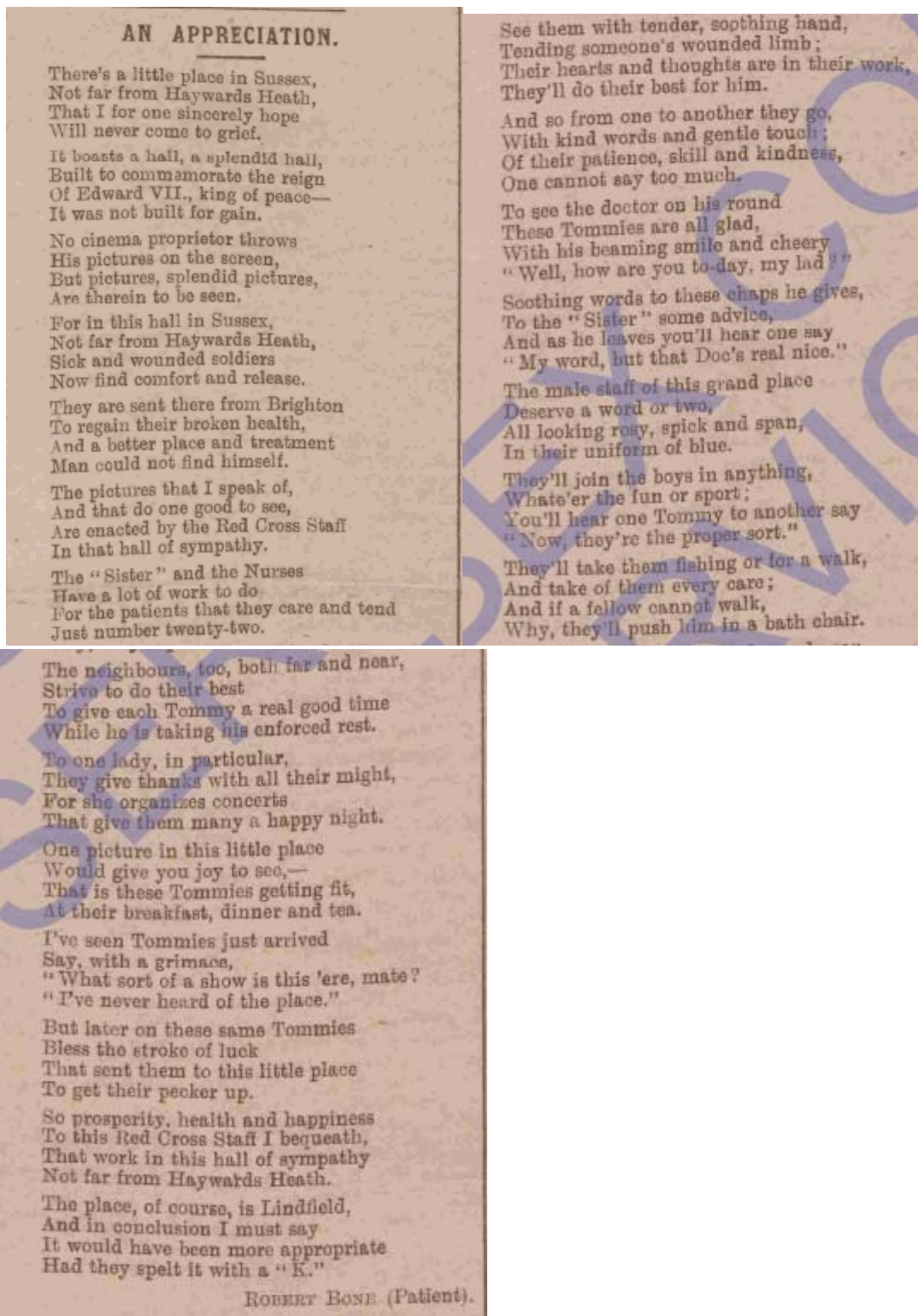


British wounded soldiers and nurses outside King Edward Hall. Mrs Hooper and Mr Hopper, VAD Commandants are seated left and right. Lindfield Parish Council Village Archive

By all accounts the patients appeared to have been pleased with the care they received and enjoyed their time in Lindfield

gentle, being capable of making their lines up as they go along. Private J. Whitney, of the 5th Royal Berks, informed a MID SUSSEX TIMES representative on Friday afternoon that he had seen 14 years' service and had spent 18 months in France. He had been wounded twice—once in the wrist by a bullet and on the other occasion in the neck by a piece of shell. "I have been in five hospitals," he proceeded, "and I have never been more comfortable than at Lindfield. The hospital is top-hole, and a nicer Sister I have never met. The nurses are also kind and most attentive, and it is the first Hospital I have been in as a patient where you could send your plate up for a second helping of vegetables and meat. I could wish for nothing better than to be ordered to remain at the Hospital for the duration of the war!" What better testimonial could the Hospital Staff receive?

Mid Sussex Times, 14 March 1916 p. 4



A Poem of Appreciation to the Hospital composed by Bombardier Bone.
 Mid Sussex Times, 21 March 1916 p 5.

Participating in Village Life

As their recovery progressed patients were allowed into the village and to participate in the social life of Lindfield. From time to time trips were organised for those soldiers who were fit enough to travel³².

The Lindfield Club on the first floor of King Edward Hall opened to patients in the daytime, where a quiet drink and billiards could be enjoyed. Similarly Lindfield Bowling Club on the Common allowed patients to sit around their green and play games during the season. Occasionally informal matches were arranged between the Club and the Hospital with tea being provided. The matches were usually won by the Club. In June 1915, virtually the entire hospital, 22 patients plus staff, were entertained by the Club³³.

Throughout the war years the patients attended numerous social events and concerts including those in Haywards Heath.³⁴ A number of the wounded soldiers even attended the National Baby Week³⁵ event in the village. They were made welcome wherever they went.

Mrs Knowles arranged regular weekly entertainment events in the hospital with local performers. Such as the entertainment on 18 January 1916, Miss Winter sang numerous songs including 'Little yellow bird', 'When you come home', 'It's a long, long trail a winding', 'Somewhere in France', and 'A little love, a little kiss.' Additionally there were songs by Private Wood, and violin selections by Mrs Tee.³⁶

As a 'thank you' the wounded soldiers held concerts to entertain staff and friends of the hospital with music, songs and sketches³⁷. According to reports in the Mid Sussex Times there was always to be found some good performers among the patients. Battery Sergeant Major Latter was an admirable leader and 'star' during his stay.

There is little doubt that the patients enjoyed their time in Lindfield.

Support from the community

From the outset Lindfield residents and trades people rallied to support the hospital by regularly giving financial donations plus every week providing a comprehensive range of goods and services; from accommodation for the paid nurse to coffee to mutton to newspapers. From clock winding to darning by Lindfield School girls. Kippers to milk, vegetables, butter and even sausage rolls³⁸.

In addition to proceeds from concerts many other fund raising events were organised to help hospital funds, such as:

- An auction of gifted items³⁹.

- Gate money from a RAMC v Locals football match⁴⁰.
- Sales of photograph showing the hospital ward, taken by W Marchant of Lindfield, at 18d each with 6d donated to hospital funds.⁴¹
- Proceeds of the Lindfield Waites singing carols around the village on Christmas morning⁴² [a traditional village event]; raised £5 3s 0d
- Pumpkin seed competition at 1d per guess, with the nearest three guesses to 516 seeds winning 4s, 2s 6d and 1s 6d. The giant pumpkin grown by Mr J Sharman weighed 88lbs! Additionally the seeds were sold at 2d each in aid of Fire Brigade's Widows' and Orphans' Fund.⁴³
- Whist Drive for the patients' Tobacco Fund; raised £11.⁴⁴
- Whist Drive and Dance; raised £61 14s 6d.⁴⁵

Nevertheless it was the regular donations and subscriptions to the Red Cross that were the most vital support plus the unpaid time given by VAD members.

Throughout the war the wounded soldiers were held in high regard and treated as heroes deserving of support by their host communities. In addition to the financial support, communities acted to raise the morale of the hospital patients.

Such an event, supported by the local MP was held in June 1918, when a fete and entertainment was organised for the soldiers from the Red Cross Hospitals in Lindfield, Cuckfield, Balcombe and Haywards Heath. Its aim was to 'take them out of themselves' and raise money for the hospitals⁴⁶.

As a mark of respect to those who 'fought and bled for England' many dwellings were decorated 'as an outward sign of an inward gratitude for what the lads in hospital blue had done for their country'.

The cost of the event was borne by local residents and over 3000 attended.



Mid

Sussex Times, 4 June 1918 p. 4

A Few Facts and Figures

The hospital was required to make regular returns on patient numbers and expenditure to the Red Cross who in turn presented annual statistical reports for all their hospitals to the War Office. The following are extracts from the Red Cross Sussex Annual Reports⁴⁷

Annual Report 3 November 1914 – 31 December 1915

Average daily number of beds - 20
 Number of patients admitted - 204
 War Office contribution per patient per day – 2s

Annual Report 1 January 1916 – 31 December 1916

Average daily number of beds - 22
 Average daily number of patients - 21
 Number of patients admitted - 144
 Average number days' stay of patient – 48.5
 Average total cost of each patient per day – 3s 10d
 War Office contribution per patient per day – 3s

Annual Report 1 January 1917 – 31 December 1917

Average daily number of beds - 24
Average daily number of patients – 22.76
Number of patients admitted - 282
Average number days' stay of patient – 27.27
Average total cost of each patient per day – 4s 2½d
War Office contribution per patient per day – 3s

Annual Report 1 January 1918 – 31 December 1918

Average daily number of beds - 26
Average daily number of patients - 21
Number of patients admitted - 244
Average number days' stay of patient – 25.1
Average total cost of each patient per day – 4s 9½d
War Office contribution per patient per day – 3s 3d

References

- ¹ N R Storey & M Housego, *Women in the First World War* (Shire Publications, 2011), p.15 & p. 16
- ² British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Service Record
- ³ Mid Sussex Times 10 November 1914, p. 7
- ⁴ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Mid Sussex Times, 3 November 1914, p.1
- ⁵ Mid Sussex Times, 3 November 1914, p. 1
- ⁶ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Mid Sussex Times 11 August 1914, p. 5
- ⁷ Storey & Housego *Women in the First World War*, p. 16
- ⁸ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Service Record
- ⁹ Mid Sussex Times, 4 August 1914 p. 4
- ¹⁰ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence
- ¹¹ Mid Sussex Times, 4 December 1917 p. 8
- ¹² Storey & Housego *Women in the First World War* p. 19. Also British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence
- ¹³ Mid Sussex Times 11 August 1914, P. 5 & 3 November 1914, p. 1
- ¹⁴ British Red Cross Sussex Reports, 1916 p.108-109, 1917 p. 122-123 and personal correspondence
- ¹⁵ Mid Sussex Times, 17 November 1914 p. 8
- ¹⁶ British Red Cross Museum and Archives personal correspondence and Service Record
- ¹⁷ British Red Cross Museum and Archives personal correspondence and Mid Sussex Times 10 November, 1914 p. 5
- ¹⁸ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Red Cross Sussex Annual Reports
- ¹⁹ Mid Sussex Times, 28 August 1917 p. 5
- ²⁰ King Edward Hall, Lindfield, www.kingedwardhall.org.uk/history
- ²¹ Mid Sussex Times, 1 May 1917 p. 6
- ²² Mid Sussex Times, 17 July 1917 p. 8
- ²³ Mid Sussex Times, 9 October 1917 p. 4 & 6
- ²⁴ Mid Sussex Times 10 November 1914 p. 5
- ²⁵ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Service Record
- ²⁶ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Service Record
- ²⁷ British Red Cross Museum and Archive personal correspondence and Service Record
King Edward Hall, Lindfield, www.kingedwardhall.org.uk/history
- ²⁸ Lindfield History Project Group, WWI Autograph Book
- ²⁹ Mid Sussex Times, 1 June 1915, p. 5
- ³⁰ Mid Sussex Times, 14 March 1916 p. 4
- ³¹ Storey & Housego *Women in the First World War*, p. 25
- ³² Mid Sussex Times, 10 November 1914 p. 3

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- ³³ Many mentions in Mid Sussex Times, e.g. 22 June 1915 p. 5, 6 July 1915 p. 5, 29 February 1916 p. 5
- ³⁴ Mid Sussex Times, 28 August 1917 p. 3
- ³⁵ Mid Sussex Times, 10 July 1917 p. 6
- ³⁶ Mid Sussex Times, 25 January 1916 p. 5
- ³⁷ Mid Sussex Times, 21 March 1916 p. 5
- ³⁸ Mid Sussex Times, 19 January 1915 p. 5
- ³⁹ Mid Sussex Times, 8 June 1915 p. 5
- ⁴⁰ Mid Sussex Times, 9 February 1915, p. 7
- ⁴¹ Mid Sussex Times, 22 June 1915 p. 5
- ⁴² Mid Sussex Times, 11 January 1916 p. 5
- ⁴³ Mid Sussex Times, 6 November 1917 p. 1
- ⁴⁴ Mid Sussex Times, 4 December 1917 p. 8
- ⁴⁵ Mid Sussex Times, 5 February 1918 p. 8
- ⁴⁶ Mid Sussex Times, 18 June 1918 p. 3
- ⁴⁷ British Red Cross Museum and Archive, personal correspondence, 1915; Red Cross Sussex Annual Report 1916 p. 108-109; Red Cross Sussex Annual Report 1918 p.122-123; 1917 Mid Sussex Times 5 February 1918, p4 & p6.