

Tewkesbury Historical Society



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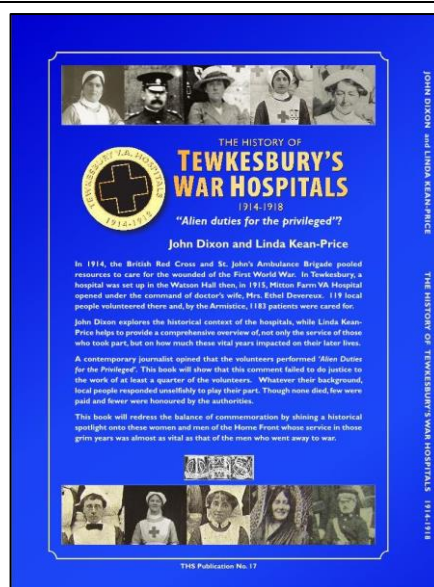
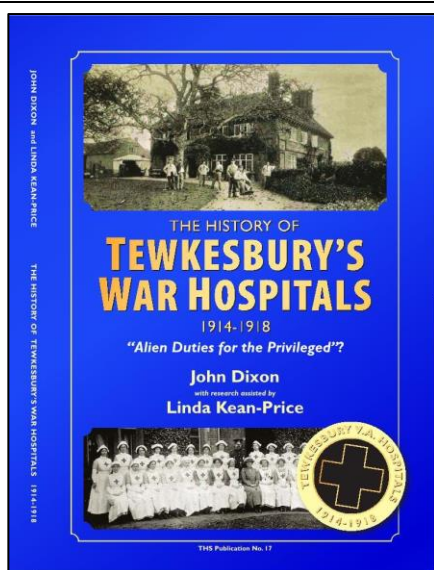
**The History of Tewkesbury's War Hospitals,
1914-1918**

'Alien Duties for the Privileged'?

by

**John Dixon, MPhil.,
with Research assisted by Linda Kean-Price**

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Author's Foreword

*"They took us out of the blood and filth of the trenches
and sent us to Mitton
- it was like going to heaven".*

By 1914, the **British Red Cross** and the **St. John's Ambulance Brigade** had pooled their resources in order to care for the wounded in the War Emergency of 1914. Initially a hospital was set up in the **Watson Hall** but in 1915 **Mitton Farm VA Hospital** was opened under the command of **Mrs. Ethel Devereux** [†¹], hitherto only a doctor's wife. 119 local people volunteered their time and talents to care for convalescent soldiers and, during the time that the war ensued, *Tewkesbury VA Hospitals* had cared for 1,183 patients.

This book will explore the historical context of the hospitals and, thanks to the research of modern volunteer **Linda Kean-Price**, we shall also provide comprehensive biographies of all who took part in this enterprise.

It was a local journalist who claimed that the volunteers performed '**Alien Duties for the Privileged**'.² "**Alien Duties**" referred to jobs, unfamiliar to the rich that virtually bordered on the servile. "**Privilege**" was a somewhat dated term in 1914, referring to a society where wealth brought "*special rights, advantages, or immunities*". Indeed, we shall suggest that this judgement did not do justice to the work of all – and especially the contribution of at least a quarter of the volunteers.

Whatever the background of these volunteers, it cannot be doubted that they responded enthusiastically, unselfishly and with dedication in playing their part in solving the national crisis for over four years. None lost their lives but few were paid — and only a minority were honoured by the authorities. We shall also follow these volunteers into their later lives to ascertain how much these vital years impacted on them.

This book will try to redress the balance by shining the historical spotlight onto these men and women — in the same way in which male members of the armed forces have already been rightly commemorated.

Mitton Foreword

by Margaret Lucas,

Margaret, and her husband Jan, still live at Mitton Manor House

I first saw Mitton Manor House in 1971 when it had been empty and derelict for twelve years. My husband Jan had "come across it" (I still don't know how or why) and was enchanted with it, so he took me to look at it.

The new Mitton houses had been built all across the front drive so the only way to reach the Manor was by the back lane past the converted farm buildings. A high wooden gate barred the back entrance and behind it were brambles to first-floor height, except for a very narrow track that led over the fence, between the brambles, to a broken window. Mountainously pregnant, I struggled over, climbed in through the window, and it was love at first sight. The horsehair plaster was sagging down between the huge

¹ This symbol is used throughout to denote a VAD with a Biography in Part II.

² *Chronicle*, 21 Nov. 1914 [SG]

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beams in the ceiling; the old oak panelling was hanging off the walls, and there was a lake of water on the floor (I doubt if there was an inch of lead left on the roof). *"Oh, how beautiful!"* I gasped *"They can't pull it down!"*

The house was due to be demolished and developed but The Civic Society and *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* challenged this in Court. We followed the Appeal with bated breath and learned from it the history of the house; how its ownership was recorded continuously back to 821 AD; its mention in Pevsner's *'Buildings of England'*; and its role as a *VA Hospital* in WWI and a base for American soldiers in WWII. To our joy, the Appeal ruled that the house must not be demolished, chiefly because of the fine quality of a fireplace in the dining room. (We had not even seen the fireplace. That side of the house was in 'Stygian' darkness as thick ivy coated the walls up to the apex of the roof.) And so, we bought the house that nobody wanted.

The Manor had become a martyr to vandalism while it stood empty, so (while we waited for planning permission to make it *"fit for habitation"*) we checked it regularly. One day my parents arrived and found an elderly man, visibly upset, standing outside the gate. When they went to help him, he said he had come back to see where he had been nursed after being wounded in the First World War and was grieved to find it derelict. We never forgot his next words: ***"They took us from the blood and the filth of the trenches and sent us to Mitton and it was like going to Heaven"***. I think that is the most beautiful thing to say of a hospital and the people working in it – and would love to know that soldier's name. Perhaps, among all John and Linda's research, I will find clues to possible names – although this account focuses upon those who worked there.

It is a privilege for us to have this research available on our home and we anticipate it with pleasure and great curiosity. We are also indebted to John for his work with **Wendy Snarey** of *Tewkesbury Museum* in tracing the plaque that poignantly records the house's time as a *VA Hospital*. The plaque hangs in the front porch. We stroke it as we go in and out, and I often open the door to people who are engrossed in reading it – and who are sometimes rather moved by the story it tells.



The Celebration of a recent Golden Wedding, reminding us of the sheer numbers of men and women who had lived in the house during WWI

2016: A Historically Thrilling Discovery!

Mitton Manor, a private home now almost secreted in a modern housing estate, has long been known as the situation for a VAD [Voluntary Aid Detachment] Hospital which offered convalescence to wounded soldiers from the Western Front in WWI.

All such hospitals were awarded a plaque as appreciation for their work – but that from Mitton Manor was missing – until recently!



Mitton Manor House 2011 [Author]



Mitton Farm Plaque, 2016 [Author]

It was located in the Town Museum by **Wendy Snarey and the Curator**. We have learned that it was rescued from an almost derelict house in 1968 by “**G [or C.] Long and H. Devereux**” (who were these heroes?) and now it has been restored by the owners of the house who have made it available for public inspection.



The present owners
Jan and Margaret Lucas
were delighted that it had been discovered
as this photograph with
Curator Maggie Thornton
demonstrated.

In 2019 it is time that the history of Tewkesbury Hospital and the VAD staff was written. This project is a natural corollary to the **WWI Centenary Project**, completed with Heritage Lottery help, by **Tewkesbury Historical Society**.³ It was inspired by Western Front Association member **Sandra Taylor**,⁴ who pointed the way towards invaluable online records – but it was **Linda Kean-Price** who undertook the invaluable research to make this book possible.

³ John Dixon, Malcolm Waldron and Sam Eedle: “*A Noble Band of Heroes*”, (THS, 2015) is the resulting book

⁴ See her website: www.rememberthefallen and the Bibliography.

Tewkesbury Medical Volunteers - Index.⁵

Title	X-Name	Surname	Rank	Duties	Time	Other	Honours	Pg.
Miss	Ethel	Andrews	LH	Night WM	450			65
Mr.	William	Andrews	Pte.	O&T	300			65
Miss	Catherine	Badham	Sister	Nurse	WT	P QAIMNS	<i>Mentioned</i>	66
Miss	Isabel	Badham	GDM	Nurse	3130			67
Mrs	Mary	Baily	GDM	Nurse	950	née Cowan		67
Mrs.	Andrewina	Baker	GDM	Nurse	6199			68
Mr.	George R.	Barlow	Pte.	O&T	300			69
Miss	Kathleen	Bayliss	GDM	Nurse	6792		BRC-VC	70
Miss	Doris	Best	LH	Nurse	1353			71
Miss	Gladys	Best	LH	Night-Nurse	1127			72
Miss	Nora E.	Best	Nurse		?	P		72
Miss	Lily	Bloxham	LH	WM	2314			73
Miss	Nellie	Bloxham	LH	WM	1000			73
Mrs	Florence E.	Bonnett	LH	Night	576			74
Mrs	Beatrice	Brown	GDM	Nurse	1915			75
Mr.	Edmund	Burton	Pte.	O&T	252			76
Mrs.	Annie	Chandler	LH	Mending	450			77
Miss	Esme	Clarke	Asst/Cdt	Sec. etc	WT		BRC-VC	78
Mr	William J.	Cole	Pte.	O&T	450			79
Mr	Arthur	Collins	Pte.	O&T	430			80
Mr	Francis	Cook[e]	Pte.	O&T.	300			80
Miss	Barbara M.	Cowan	LH	WM	472			81
Mr	Thomas	Crisp	Ord.	Orderly	WT			82
Mr.	Edmund	Cudmore	Pte.	O&T	430			83
Miss	Marjorie	Davies	LH	WM	453			84
Miss	Elaine	Devereux	GDM	Nurse	5184	P		84
Mrs.	Ethel M.	Devereux	Cdt		WT		M.B.E.	85
Miss	Doris E.	Dyer	GDM	Nurse	2111			87
Miss	Kathleen	Dyer	GDM	WM & Nurse	781			87
Mr	Henry	Dyer	Pte.	O&T	459			88
Mrs.	Winf/d M.	Dyer	LH	Mending	750			89
Mrs.	Edith A.	Elbrow	Nurse	WM	421			90
Mrs.	Jessie	Elder	Sister	Sister	1600			90
Dr.	Matthew	Elder	M.O.	M.O.	1 pd			91
Mr	James	Fellows	Pte.	O&T	300			92
Mr	Arthur C.	Finnigan	Pte.	O&T	430			93
Miss	Lucy	Franklin	GDM	nurse	600			94
Mr.	Cecil W.	Geden	Pte.	O&T	252			94

⁵ For a key to abbreviations, see page 64

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Mrs.	Constance	Godfrey	LH	WM	880			95
Title	X-Name	Surname	Rank	Duties	Time	Other	Honours	Pg.
Miss	Effie	Goode	LH	Night & WM	450			96
Miss	Helen	Gordon-Duff	Nurse	Nursing	WT			96
Mrs.	Annie	Gough	Cook	Cook	3379			97
Mr.	Ernest L.	Green	Pte.	O&T	300			98
Miss	Thirza	Haffner	GDM	WM	930			99
Mrs.	Emily	Hale	CW	CW & Cook	4368			99
Mrs.	Bessie	Hall	LH	KH	516	Née Watkins		100
Miss	Vera	Hayward	LH	WM	663			101
Mr	Reg. H.	Higgins	Pte.	O&T	252			102
Mrs.	Ada	Holbech	Nurse	Trainer	?			102
Miss	Irene	Holmes	LH	Cook	800			103
Miss	Enid L.	Horsford	GDM	Nurse	1212			104
Mr.	C.E.E.	Hothersall	Pte.	O&T	300			105
Mr.	George P.	Howell	Pte.	O&T	162			106
Mr.	Albert H.	Hulbert	Pte.	O&T	450			107
Miss	Minnie G.	Hunter	Sister	Nurse	WT	P		108
Mrs	Beatrice	Jarman	LH	KH	1990	-Morrison		108
Miss	Adeline	Jones	GDM	Nurse	1360			109
Mr	Ernest B.	Linnell	Pte.	O&T	PT			109
Mr.	William	Linnell	Pte.			<i>Conscript</i>		110
Mrs	Katie N.	Liston	LH	Cook	1460			111
Dr.	Walter	Liston	M.O.	M.O.	1 pd	& F'ton. Ct		112
Miss	Mary E	MacCabe	Nurse	Night	?			113
Miss	Phyllis	Mence	GDM	WM-Nurse	1165	<i>Nurse WT</i>		114
Mrs.	Elizabeth	Merrell	Nurse	Night	1424			115
Miss	Mary E.	Merrell	GDM	Nurse	1325		<i>ROHS-Badge</i>	115
Miss	Elizabeth	Mole	Nurse	WM	942			116
Miss	Constance	Moore	Asst:	QM & Nurse	WT		<i>ROHS-Badge</i>	117
Miss	Hilda M.	Moore	Cook	Cook	3198			120
Miss	K. Dorothy	Moore	GDM	Nurse	880			119
Mrs.	Katharine Gresham	Moore	QM	QM	WT		<i>Mentioned & ROHS-Cert</i>	121
Miss	Nora L.	Moore	Cook	Cook	3903		<i>BRC-VC</i>	118
Mrs.	Lilian	Jessop	GDM	Nurse	980	Née Moore		119

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Miss	Ellen B.	Morgan	LH	Cook	420			122
Miss	Daisy N.	Mulford	Nurse	Nurse	?			123
Title	X-Name	Surname	Rank	Duties	Time	Other	Honours	Pg
Miss	Dorothy	Nash	GDM	Nurse	500	P		124
Miss	Effie M.	Nicholson	GDM	WM	25pw	P		125
Miss	Norah M.	O'Brien	Nurse	Sister	WT	P		125
Miss	Agnes I.	Parker	Nurse	Mending		P		126
Mr.	Alfred	Perks	Sec.	O&T	450			127
Miss	Ellen	Perks	LH	Night Nurse	1140			127
Miss	Cicely	Pike	LH	Night Nurse	950			128
Miss	Minnie	Reeves	LH	Cook	1350			129
Mrs.	Alice	Ridler	GDM	Cook	450			130
Miss	Gertrude	Ridler	GDM	Nurse	930			130
Miss	Dorothy	Roberts	LH	Night	440			131
Miss	Phyllis	Roberts	LH	WM	800			131
Miss	Edith M.	Scobell	GDM	Nurse	2135	P		132
Miss	Margaret	Snowden	GDM	Nurse	7171		"ROHS"- Badge	133
Miss	Cicely	Spencer	GDM	WM & KH	1870		BRC-VC	134
Mr.	William	Sprackling	C'feur	Ambulance	1600			134
Mrs.	Maud	Stephens	LH	Mending	600			135
Miss	Eleanor H.	Steward	GDM	Nurse & Sec.	5,184 -WT	F Ct VAH	Mentioned 'twice; BRC-VC	136
Miss	Jessie	Steward	QM	Cook & QM	WT		Mentioned BRC-VC	137
Mr.	Harold A.	Stiles	Pte.	O&T	243			138
Mrs.	Doris	Stringer	Nurse	Nurse	2520	Later WT		139
Miss	Laura M.	Stringer	Cook	WH then	3800			140
Miss	Mary	Swann	GDM	Nurse Night	2352-	Dumbleton		141
Mr.	Walter E.	Taylor	Pte.	O&T	420			142
Mrs	Louise	Taynton	LH	Mending	750			142
Mrs	Julia	Turberville	CW	CW	4368			143
Dr.	Arthur F.	Turner	M.O.	M.O.	1 pd	Died 1918		144
Mr.	William	Vale	Pte.	O&T	300			145
Miss	Maud	Walton	GDM	Nurse	1975			146
Miss	Alice	Watson	LH	Mending	750			146
Miss	Fanny	Watson	LH	Mending	750			147
Mr.	Francis E.	Watts	Pte.	O&T	252			148
Mr.	Hector	Whiteley	Pte.	O&T	430			149
Miss	Kath. E.	Wigan	GDM	Nurse	4108	P	1 SS	149

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Miss	Ruth D.	Wigan	Cook	Cook	1436			154
Miss	Phoebe	Wilkes	Nurse	Nurse	WT	P		154
Title	X-Name	Surname	Rank	Duties	Time	Other	Honours	Pg
Miss	Edith	Williams	GDM	Nurse	1940			155
Mrs	Maude M.	Wilson	LH	Mending	600			155
Miss	Grace T. J.	Winter	LH	WM	530			156
Miss	Jose. F.	Winter	LH	WM	1137			156
Miss	Beatrice	Woodhull	?	Domestic		P		157
'Boy'	Victor	Woodhull	Orderly	Gen. Help	WT			158
Miss	Hope	Wratishlaw	Nurse	Nurse	WT			159
Mr.	John Samuel	Yarnall	Off.	Account't, O&T	WT & 300			159
Hon. Mrs	Maud Evelyn	Yorke	GDM	Nurse	600	p-F Ct.	<i>Mentioned</i>	160

Key to Abbreviations in List of Volunteers

- ?** Information not available
- Rank:** **Assistant;** Char**Woman;** **Chauffeur;** **Commandant;** **General Duty Member;** **Local Helper;** **Medical Officer;** **Officer SJAB;** **Orderly;** **Private SJAB;** **QuarterMaster;** **Secretary.**
- Duties:** **Kitchen Help;** **Orderly & Transport;** **QuarterMaster;** **Ward Maid;**
- Time:** all accumulated hours **Part Time;** **per day;** **Whole Time**
- Other:** **& other Forthampton Court Voluntary Auxiliary Hospital;** **Professional Nurse with Territorial Force or Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service**
- Honours:** **Service Mentioned in the Press;** **British Red Cross-Vellum Certificate;** **Scarlet Stripe;** **Roll of Honourable Service Badge;**
- +** Separates families of Volunteers

Other Abbreviations used in Part II

- i/c** *in charge*
- IWM** *Imperial War Museum*
- kia** *killed in action*
- OP** *Out of Print*
- Pg** *Page*
- SJAB** *St. John's Ambulance [Brigade]*
- TB** *Tuberculosis: a serious bacterial infection spread from coughs or sneezes*
- TBC** *Tewkesbury Borough Council [Toby Clempson]*