

= Australian Voluntary Hospital =

The Australian Voluntary Hospital was a military hospital staffed by Australian expatriates in England that served on the Western Front between 1914 and 1916 . For much of this time it was the only Australian presence on the Western Front .

= = Origin = =

When the First World War broke out in August 1914 , Lady ( Rachel ) Dudley , the wife of the former Governor @-@ General of Australia , the Lord Dudley , decided to create a hospital from Australian doctors and nurses who were in the United Kingdom . There were relatively large numbers of these ; while doctors and nurses could be trained in Australia , advanced qualifications still required a trip overseas .

Lady Dudley discussed her proposal with King George V , and then with the Secretary of State for War , Lord Kitchener , and the British Army 's Director General Army Medical Services , Sir Arthur Sloggett , who authorised the hospital . The hospital was formally offered to the British government by the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom , Sir George Reid on 15 August 1914 . Volunteers responded to advertisements that Lady Dudley placed in English newspapers on 17 August 1914 . Women doctors were not accepted , but women nurses were welcomed .

The Australian Voluntary Hospital was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William L 'Estrange Eames CB VD , an officer in the Australian Army Medical Corps who had served in the South African War , and was holidaying in England with his family at the time . He was unable to join the First Australian Imperial Force ( AIF ) , which was not accepting enlistments outside Australia . He was granted the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps . Ida Greaves RRC , from Royal Newcastle Hospital was appointed matron . The hospital soon reached a strength of 120 staff , of whom 36 were nurses .

= = Operations = =

The Australian Voluntary Hospital assembled its personnel and equipment at a camp established on the grounds of the Ranelagh Club , which had been loaned for the purpose . It departed for France on 29 August 1914 on Lord Dunraven 's yacht " Greta " , which had been accepted by the Admiralty as a transport for medical units , and moved to Le Havre . Owing to the German advance , the hospital was evacuated to St Nazaire on 2 September , and reopened there 5 September . The 100 @-@ bed hospital was set up in a park under canvas , with a school and house close by rented for various facilities . It began receiving casualties from the Retreat from Mons the next day .

On 26 October 1914 , the Australian Voluntary Hospital moved to Wimereux , where it established a 200 @-@ bed hospital . The hospital was well equipped , with motor ambulances donated by organisations in Australia , a pathology laboratory and the only X @-@ ray unit in the area . A day after it opened on 29 October , it began receiving patients from the First Battle of Ypres . Much of the unit 's tents which accommodated the male personnel of the hospital were lost in a blizzard on 11 November 1914 , and the men moved to the Golf club house of the Hôtel du Golf et Cosmopolite in Wimereux , which was eventually leased by the hospital , and became its officers ' mess .

For a time , the Australian Voluntary Hospital was the only Australian presence on the Western Front , but in April 1916 , Australian Army units began arriving from the Middle East in large numbers . The Australian Voluntary Hospital 's site in Wimereux was taken over by No. 3 Australian General Hospital , AIF in June 1916 . The Australian Voluntary Hospital was then absorbed into the British Army as No. 32 Stationary Hospital , with Eames remaining in command . By 1 May 1919 , the hospital had treated 73 @,@ 868 patients .

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