

The Hale End Red Cross Hospital



Above: The Red Cross Hale End/Brookfield Hospital at Oak Hill.



The accepted story of the Hale End Red Cross Hospital is that it opened in 1915 for the treatment of convalescent servicemen in the grounds of Brookfield House in Oak Hill (Then part of Walthamstow) The owner of the house, Mr. Thomas Sutcliffe Armstrong, had donated the land, as well as contributing to the cost of the building, in memory of

his son who had been killed in the war.

Unfortunately, the problem with this scenario, which is repeated in all the accounts of the Hospital, is that Thomas Sutcliffe son, as shown by a copy of the Probate record of his estate, didn't die until 1917!



ARMSTRONG Arthur Sutcliffe of Brookfield Hale End Woodford Green **Essex** second-lieutenant 1st battalion Cambridgeshire regiment died 31 May 1917 at No. 2 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station Belgium on active service Administration **London** 25 July to Thomas Sutcliffe Armstrong engineer. Effects £273 os. 1d.

What is absolutely clear is that the hospital, during the period of the war, was very much inspired and supported by local people. Evidence of this being seen in its benefactors. Indeed, Helen Mathieson, a member of a local prominent family served at the hospital as a Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse.

The Brookfield Red Cross Hospital



The Hospital, which also became known as the Brookfield Red Cross Hospital, had 30 beds. It was equipped and maintained by the Hale End District Association, which had been founded as a ratepayers' association in 1909. The Hospital was administered by a management committee according to the rules of the Red Cross Society.

Above: The interior of Hale End /Brookfield Hospital



Above: Patients and staff at Hale End/Brookfields Hospital

The Hospital closed in February 1919 after the war, and the building was then used by the Walthamstow Urban District Council to accommodate patients waiting to be transferred to the Walthamstow Isolation Hospital in Chingford

Benefactors

As well as Thomas Armstrong's invaluable contributions, Mrs Henry Young of Larkshill Farm, Chingford, gave £100 for the linen, and further funds for the upkeep of the Hospital were given by Mr. Charles Merriam, the Managing Director of the Xylonite Company in Highams Park. Between 1923-5, £1,020 was invested in the Hospital by the Hale End District Association Hospital Charity of which Thomas Armstrong was a prominent member.

The Brookfield Orthopaedic Hospital and School for Crippled Children

In 1922 the building was bought by the Council and, in 1923, it became a centre for crippled children - the Brookfield Orthopaedic Hospital and School for Crippled Children – which was governed by a council of representatives from the Essex local authorities. The governing body consisted of 4 members from the Walthamstow Borough Council, 3 from the Walthamstow Educational Committee, 3 from the Public Assistance Committee, 2 from Essex County Council, 3 from the Connaught Hospital and a few from various welfare organisations. The patients were paid for at a rate of 2 guineas (£2.10) a week.

The Physical Conditions Of The Patients

The Hospital had been founded as a result of the difficulty experienced in obtaining treatment for crippled children, particularly in the Walthamstow area. It had 30 beds. Children up to the age of 16 years, who were referred from Local authorities Public Assistance committees and other Poor Law authorities were treated. The main conditions operated on, were for anterior poliomyelitis, spastic paralysis, congenital defects, torticollis, genu varum or genu valgum due to rickets, congenital dislocation of the hip and osteomyelitis.

A Proposed New Hospital

In 1934, Essex County Council considered building a new hospital on land adjacent to the Hospital for 200 chronic cases. The Hospital's Board of Governors agreed in principle to sell its buildings and site provided that facilities for treating orthopaedic patients would be available in

the new hospital and that Walthamstow children would receive priority admission. Unfortunately this scheme never happened.

Patient Admissions, Treatments & Costs

In 1935 the average stay of each patient was 36 days, compared with 131 days in 1934, while the average cost per in-patient per week was £2 3s 5d (£2.17) with an additional 5s 6d (27p) for schooling in 1935 (£2 4s 5d (£2.22) plus 7s 2d (36p) schooling.

Admissions & Treatments

Since its opening in 1922, some 781 children had been admitted by 1935 and 955 operations were performed.

Although the schoolroom was improved and re-equipped in 1935, in 1936 the residential Hospital School moved to new premises at Hale End, where it was named the Hale End Open Air School (it was renamed as Wingfield House School in 1957).

The Hospital closed in 1939, at the outbreak of WW2.

Brookfield House School



At the end of the 1950's, the Hospital was demolished and a new school built on the site for children with physical handicaps. In 1956. Brookfield House was renamed Spackman House, a hostel for the elderly that was owned and run by the Essex County Council

The Brookfield House School opened in 1964, with pupils being transferred from Wingfield House School.

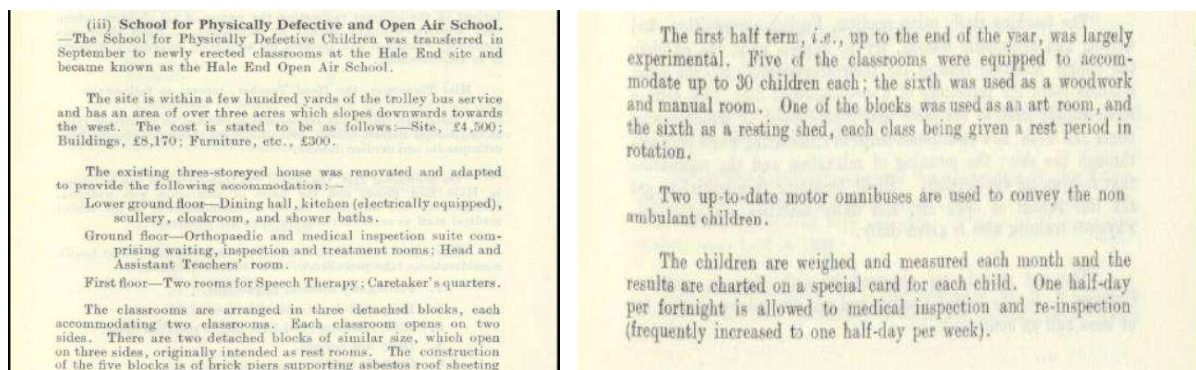
Brookfield House School as seen from Alders Avenue

Spackman House closed in 1990. The building was sold and later demolished (but, apparently, the porch of the original house was saved and graces the clubhouse of the Wadham Bowling Club) A small housing estate now occupies the site.

In 1964 the School moved from the Wingfield House site, returning to the original Brookfield location at Alders Avenue, Woodford Green. It was renamed Brookfield House School and is a Special Educational Needs school.

Hale End Open Air School (1936 - 1964)

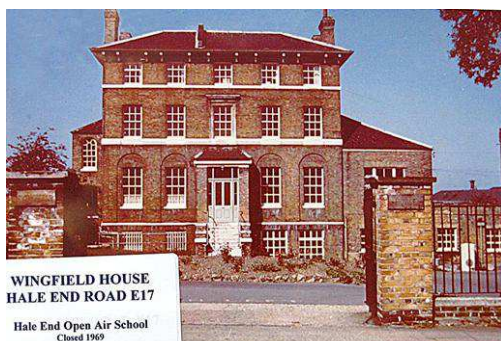
In 1919 Walthamstow Urban District Council had taken on the former convalescent military hospital at Brookfield House, Hale End. In 1923 this became the Brookfield Orthopaedic Hospital and School for Crippled Children.



In 1936 the residential Hospital School moved to new premises at Wingfield House, an old mansion in Hale End Road. It was then known as Hale End Open Air School.

Paul Playle, an ex patient remembers: ***“The Hale End Rd. (E17) open air school. We sat in winter with coats on with 3 sides open. About 1959, they stopped opening them (new directive perhaps) and gas overhead heaters were used. I enjoyed my time at the school - good friendly teachers. Not much learning though - I was either having Sun Lamp treatment and exercises up the clinic and sinal wash outs!”***

Wingfield House School



In October 1940, during WW2, the nearby Shernhall Street Special School (for epileptics and mentally handicapped children) was bombed, and moved into two classrooms at the Open Air School.

In 1957 the Open Air School was renamed Wingfield House School. By 1959 the open air treatments had been much diluted; no longer were the classrooms kept

open on three sides - and heating was provided in winter.

In 1964 the School moved again, returning to the original Brookfield location at Alders Avenue, Woodford Green.

Following the departure of the Open Air School, Wingfield House became for a time the Frederick Bremer Secondary School. (Now a thriving Secondary School on a purpose built site in Fulbourne Road) In 1972, the Whitefield School (the successor to the Shernhall Street Special School) arrived.



The original mansion was demolished and replaced by the Whitefield Schools and Centre, a Foundation Special School with 300 places for children with special educational needs. It has its entrance in Macdonald Road. Whitfield School is now a world famous school and therapeutic treatment centre..... and that's another story.

Bill Bayliss
August 2014

Some Sources:

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