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Gordon Guggisberg, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., R.E.

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE  
**GOLD COAST HOSPITAL**  
AND A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF  
THE HISTORY OF MEDICAL  
PROGRESS IN ACCRA. :: ::



**T**HE opening of the Gold Coast Hospital marks an important epoch in the history of medical progress in the Gold Coast, and furnishes a suitable opportunity for recording briefly the provision made in Accra for the medical and surgical treatment of sick Africans in the past.

There are no available records shewing what provision, if any, was made for hospital accommodation in the Gold Coast prior to

1878. In that year, however, the first definite attempt was made to provide a hospital at Accra. It consisted of a series of small wooden huts on the site of the present District Customs Offices, and was opened by Dr. Jeans in 1878 for the use of the Government and Imperial Forces.

Later—sometime in 1881 or 1882—the hospital was transferred to a building in Ussher Town, known as Old Lutterodt's House, but no reliable information exists with regard to the accommodation provided therein. It may, however, be presumed that the accommodation was woefully inadequate and that the building itself was unsuitable for the treatment of cases on up-to-date lines.

The next step in the ladder of medical progress was reached when the foundation stone of the present Old Colonial Hospital was

laid by Governor Rowe in 1881. This building consisted of one two-storied block, with a European Ward of four beds and a Native Ward of twelve beds on the upper floor, and a Dispensary and Nurses' quarters on the ground floor. On its completion in 1883, Dr. McCarthy was transferred from Lagos and appointed Colonial Surgeon-in-charge. (It is interesting to note that it took about the same time to complete this small block as it has taken to build the present new hospital with its elaborate up-to-date provision for electric lighting and sanitation and quarters for European and African Staff).

The accommodation provided by this small building was so obviously inadequate that it had to be enlarged during the

Governorship of Sir W. Brandford Griffith by the erection of a second block with a connecting verandah.

Though this hospital was a distinct advance on the makeshift buildings which had previously done duty as hospitals, it was soon found that its accommodation was too limited to supply the growing needs for treatment of the inhabitants of Accra, who, under the influence of education and intercourse with Europeans, were being gradually weaned from their faith in native witchdoctors and were daily becoming more alive to the efficacy and advantages of European methods of treatment.

The necessity for a new hospital with largely increased accommodation for patients, up-to-date appointments, and provision for

the application of the latest discoveries and achievements of medical science to the healing of disease, was generally recognized and was specially advocated by the late Dr. F. G. Hopkins when Principal Medical Officer of the Gold Coast. His recommendation was opportunely supported at the time by an earthquake which cracked the eastern block from end to end. This part of the hospital was then condemned as dangerous, but it was patched up by temporary supports and is actually still in use.

The outbreak and continuance of the Great War put an effective stop to building operations on an extensive scale in the Gold Coast, and the question of the construction of a new hospital had perforce to be postponed for a time, but it was not lost sight of.

Plans for a new hospital and the question of a suitable site were carefully considered by Dr. T. E. Rice during his term of office as Principal Medical Officer of the Gold Coast, and proposals were submitted for the approval of Sir Hugh Clifford, who had taken the keenest interest in the scheme from its inception.

In October, 1916, a Board assembled to consider and fix a suitable site for a new hospital, and they finally decided on the present site as the most suitable within easy reach of the town.

The site, which is an excellent one on the West side of the Lagoon, comprises approximately 170 acres and is eminently suitable in every respect for the erection of such a hospital as has now been built. It is easily drained, conveniently situated, and the soil is suitable.

The original plans and designs of the New Hospital were drawn up by Dr. C. V. Le Fanu, late Medical Specialist, West African Medical Staff, and elaborated in detail in 1917, by Mr. Harrison, late Architect, Public Works Department, but owing to the continuance of the War it was found impossible to make a commencement on any part of the scheme, which was, consequently, abandoned for the time being.

On the conclusion of the war, however, His Excellency the Governor, Sir F. G. Guggisberg, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., R.E., immediately after his arrival in the Gold Coast, ordered the whole of the plans to be sent to England and submitted to the Advisory Medical and Sanitary Committee for their criticisms and comments, and in November, 1919, a complete set of drawings—revised and amplified.

since the submission of the first set in 1917—was despatched to England. These drawings were considered by the Advisory Committee and were received back in March, 1920, with a list of the Committee's recommendations and suggestions.

Before anything could be done in the matter of offering the work to contract, or making a start with it departmentally, the Report of the Advisory Committee was very carefully considered by the Principal Medical Officer and the Director of Public Works, and the suggestions of the Committee were adopted where possible and suitable for local needs.

When the Committee's suggestions had been co-ordinated, work was commenced on the final set of plans and many consultations were held between members of the Medical Department and

the Public Works Department; and to the constant and close co-operation between the two Departments is due the carrying through to a successful completion of the present magnificent block of buildings, embodying the very latest ideas in hospital construction, fitting, and equipment.

By frequent consultations, by the careful consideration given to the suggestions made by the Advisory Board, and by the adoption of other ideas suggested by local knowledge and experience, the original scheme has developed until we now possess a Hospital which, when completed, will challenge comparison with any building of a similar character in any of our Colonies.

In March, 1920, the plans were sufficiently advanced to allow of tenders being called for, and in August, 1920, a contract was let

to Messrs. Thomas and Edge, West African Building and Engineering Co., Ltd., for the construction of a section of the hospital.

The portion of the building so given out to contract was designed to form a complete hospital unit, capable on completion, of being immediately used for the admission and treatment of patients. Consequently it had been intended to complete and open this portion first, and to make provision for the construction of the remainder of the buildings subsequently.

This first contract, however, only allowed for the construction of the General Ward Block with accommodation for 72 beds (including two beds in each of the four end verandahs) plus four small Special Wards, each with accommodation for one, or possibly two,

beds in an emergency ; so that at the most there would have been accommodation for 80 patients.

It was soon realised that the number of patients anxious to avail themselves of hospital treatment would be far more than could possibly be accommodated in one Ward Block, and that duplication of Staff would be necessary, which would involve increased expenditure and be unsatisfactory from every point of view.

Under these circumstances, therefore, His Excellency, early in 1922, ordered that the whole question be carefully considered with a view to making immediate adequate provision for the construction of buildings, which would not only provide sufficient hospital accommodation for many years to come, but would allow for the gathering together in one area of the entire Medical Staff of Accra,

with the exception of the Headquarters Staff and the officials required for running the European Hospital.

In the original scheme three blocks, each with a total possible accommodation of 80 beds, were contemplated, but after considerable discussion it was decided to erect one large block in addition to the Block in course of construction under contract No. 1; this Block to be half as large again as the blocks originally designed, and to contain (including the verandahs) a maximum accommodation for 112 patients.

In all other respects this additional ward block is an exact copy of the first ward block. All told, therefore, there will be accommodation for 192 in-patients (including 16 beds in the end verandahs.

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and special small wards, in addition, to take 8 or 16 patients in an emergency).

The above information refers to in-patients only—adequate accommodation on the most modern and up-to-date lines has been provided for the examination and treatment of out-patients. The out-patients' block has been so constructed that it will be impossible for any out-patient to obtain access to the Wards or to the general hospital grounds, and the number of out-patients presenting themselves for treatment is automatically registered in passing out by a self-registering turnstile.

The entire hospital buildings are lighted throughout by electricity and special up-to-date fittings, have been installed in the

Operating Theatre, etc., while the Ophthalmic and the X-Ray Rooms have also been provided with special fittings.

The electricity is generated by National Oil Engines, two in number, of 23 b.h.p. each, driving Metropolitan Vickers' dynamos. The engines are in duplicate in case of a breakdown, and are temporarily housed in a shed in the Hospital grounds.

It is hoped, however, that eventually the whole Institution will be lighted, and derive the necessary electric power from the town supply.

As the Hospital is of two-storied construction electric lifts have been installed, which are also driven from the above plant.

One of the items to which most careful attention has been paid is the drainage of the Institution. An up-to-date system of

sanitation is, of course, of vital importance to any hospital, but is doubly so in the case of a large hospital in the tropics, and every care has been taken to devise a system which will, it is hoped, give the best results.

A complete water-carriage system has been laid, this being the first scheme of any magnitude to be carried out in the Colony, and the very latest principles of tropical sanitation have been adopted.

While the actual drainage work can be stated to have been carried out on well-known lines of sanitation, the disposal of the sewage has presented many difficulties, principally because the natural outfall from the hospital is into a landlocked lagoon, which rendered it imperative that some special form of treatment, providing a satisfactory effluent, should be devised.



Here we had no reliable data to guide us, but as a result of exhaustive enquiries it was finally decided to erect an Imhoff tank with secondary purification through filter beds, and it is hoped that this system will prove as efficient as it is claimed to be.

Before giving a brief description of the various buildings which constitute the hospital it should be mentioned that as the only access to the site from Accra was by the old road which runs close to the beach, and which is occasionally impassable when the Lagoon is full, and in any case could not be regarded as a motor road, some other road to the site had to be provided, and, accordingly, a causeway across the Lagoon was constructed which leads directly to the hospital. This causeway is about 530 yards long and contains 14,000 cubic yards of earth. Owing to the action of the tiny waves when

the wind is strong it was found necessary to protect the sides of the causeway by paving them with stone. Bridges were also built at intervals. Apart altogether from the main purpose for which it was designed—to provide a ready means of access from Accra to the new Hospital—this causeway has been and will be of the greatest benefit to the inhabitants of the adjoining property and there is always a constant stream of traffic, vehicular and pedestrian, passing over it.

Mention may also be made here of the fact that accommodation in the immediate vicinity of the hospital has been provided for the African Staff who will assist in working it. This accommodation consists of houses for :—

	2	Senior Native Officials.
	12	Married Nurses.
	5	Single Nurses.
	24	Probationers.
	14	Kroo Boys.
Total ..	<u>57</u>	Members of Staff.

The above will all be provided with permanent quarters built of concrete, the accommodation differing according to grade.

The following is a brief description of the constituent buildings of the hospital :—

**Out-Patient Block.**—An imposing double-storey building with a compact and well arranged Dispensary at the back. There

is a commodious waiting-room where, after registering, the patients may await examination, and for this purpose two consulting rooms for male and female patients are provided. After medical examination, and having received from the Dispensary the medicine prescribed, the patient will pass out through a self-registering turnstile into the road or, if the case necessitates treatment in hospital, pass along a corridor into the Ablution Rooms preliminary to admission to hospital as an in-patient. There is also a well-fitted Minor Operating Theatre on the ground floor for such cases as need not be taken into hospital. Upstairs, access to which is provided by two staircases and an electric lift, are situated the Dental Surgery, where patients suffering from their teeth will be treated by a Dentist, the Ophthalmic Rooms for treatment of affections of the eyes, and X-Ray Rooms,

where the latest discoveries in Medical Science will be enlisted in the diagnosis and treatment of injuries and diseases of internal organs.

**Ablution Block.**—Cases for detention in hospital will pass from the Out-patients' Block, through a gate, into this Block, in which there are two bathrooms for male and female patients ; shower-baths being also provided for suitable cases. Here, after bathing, they will exchange the clothing (the patients' clothing being stored in the Clothing Store after washing and disinfection) and after dressing in hospital clothes they will pass on into the Ward Block and become in-patients.

**Administration Block.**—This is a two-storey building containing the Record Offices and Staff Rooms downstairs, with well-fitted and completely equipped Lecture Rooms upstairs, in which,

as well as in the wards, the Native Staff will receive a complete theoretical and practical training in their duties as Dispensers and Nurses.

**Ward Block No. 1.**—This is approached from the Administrative Block by a double-storey colonnade of majestic appearance and graceful proportions. It has four large wards—two upstairs and two downstairs—on either side of the colonnade, which runs right through the block as a backbone. These wards are lofty, airy, and well-lit, with a double row of beds in each, accommodating 16 patients. At the end of each Ward there is a spacious and shady verandah, in which convalescent patients may enjoy the benefits of the outer air and more extended views, and in which the principles of open-air treatment may be applied to suitable cases of diseases of

the chest. In addition to the large wards this Block contains four small wards—each with accommodation for one patient, or in cases of emergency two patients—for the treatment of cases desiring special privacy, or for special surgical or medical cases. The small ward attached to the female Ward in this Block will be called the “Princess Mary.” Ward, by gracious permission of Her Royal Highness, who has also been pleased to endow it with a portion of the funds subscribed by the peoples of the Gold Coast as a Wedding Present on the occasion of her recent marriage.

**Operation Theatre Block.**—Proceeding from Ward Block No. 1 along the colonnade we come to the Block containing the two Operating Theatres which are situated on either side of the colonnade. These are provided with all the most modern equipment and special

lighting, and in addition there are separate rooms where instruments, dressings, etc., will be sterilized in steam sterilizers ; and anæsthetizing rooms in which patients for operation can be " put to sleep " without undergoing the nerve-wracking experience of witnessing the preparations for operation which is so appalling to the ordinary individual.

**Ward Block No. 2.**—At the end of the colonnade is situated Ward Block No. 2, which, except for being of larger dimensions than Ward Block No. 1, is identical with it in all respects. It provides a maximum accommodation for 112 patients.

**Kitchen.**—Beyond Ward Block No. 2 are situated the Kitchen and Food Stores, which are both included in one building and will be fitted with large stove and special boilers. From the kitchen

all food is brought under cover, by trolley, to each Ward Block, where it is distributed, that for the upper floor being conveyed upstairs by lift.

**Laundry.**—A most important feature of the hospital is the laundry (with drying-room) which is equipped with modern machinery and all the latest appliances for the washing and drying of the large amount of clothing and bed linen that will be soiled in the running of such a large institution.

**Disinfecter House.**—A separate building which contains a large steam boiler and steam disinfecter for the disinfection of all infected and soiled articles.

**Medical Stores.**—This is a hollow building, enclosing a central court-yard, in which the medical and surgical stores will be housed

under conditions least favourable to the deterioration inseparable from storage in the tropics, and from which, as a General Store, supplies will be distributed to Outstations as required.

**Temporary Power House.**—This temporary building houses the Power Plant for supplying the electric current by means of which the entire buildings are lighted; also the power provided for the lifts, X Ray, Dental, and other mechanical appliances.

**Mortuary.**—This building lies on the extreme corner of the site and includes a Post-mortem Room, Mortuary, Coffin Store, and Garage for Motor Hearse.

**Lodges.**—There are two Lodges at the front entrances to the hospital, one of which has a garage attached for housing the Hospital Motor Ambulance. This ambulance has been specially

constructed by the Albion Motor Car Co., Ltd., for the transfer to Hospital of patients who cannot sit upright and also to enable patients at a distance to be carried to the hospital under the most comfortable conditions.

**Pathological Laboratory.**—This building stands alone at the far side of the hospital site and will be fitted with the most modern equipment to enable the Director of Medical Research and his staff to carry out their investigations into the origin and causes of obscure tropical diseases under the most favourable conditions. A large building adjoining the Laboratory is provided for housing animals.

**Quarters.**—Nine bungalows, two of which are double, have been erected for the accommodation of the European Staff,

providing quarters for 14 officials, viz. :—Resident Medical Officer, 4 Nursing Sisters, and 9 other members of the Staff.

Reference has already been made to the provision of accommodation for 57 members of the African Staff.

A commencement has been made with the fencing in of the hospital grounds, and about half-a-mile of iron paling has already been fixed ; but the full extent of the area to be enclosed—which is being laid out by the Agricultural Department—may be estimated by the fact that two-and-a-half miles of fencing will be necessary for the purpose.

The buildings have been built throughout of concrete block-work, with flat reinforced concrete roofs, and the floors laid with

Ebnerite—a patent composition which gives a jointless floor, hard, yet resilient, and in every way suitable for a hospital.

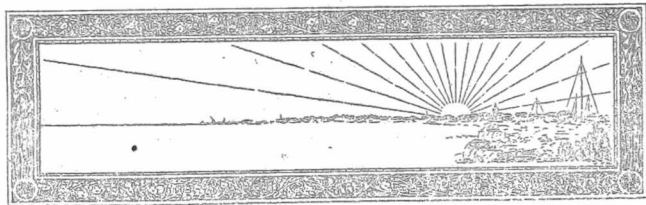
The drainage and electric light work have been done by the Public Works Department, but with this exception the entire building operations have been carried out by Messrs. Thomas and Edge, West African Building and Engineering Co., Ltd., whose workmanship has been of a very high-class nature throughout, and who have carried out the contract without a single avoidable hitch.

When all the work contemplated has been completed and the grounds suitably laid out the result will be an Institution which will not only be Accra's proudest architectural asset, but will be the largest and most up-to-date hospital in all Africa.

The foundation stone of the Hospital was laid on 28th January, 1921, by His Excellency Sir Gordon Guggisberg who stated in his speech at the ceremony that the Hospital had since his arrival in the Gold Coast taken priority over all other Government expenditure in view of its paramount importance not only for the care of the sick, but for the training of Africans in all branches of Medicine, Surgery and Sanitation.

His Excellency gave instructions that the first four Wards should be named after the four officers most intimately connected with the details of construction, viz. :—Dr. Alexander, C.M.G., Dr. C. V. Le Fanu, Dr. A. J. R. O'Brien, M.C., and Mr. Hedges, Architect, Public Works Department.

As has been already mentioned the small Ward attached to the female Ward in Block No. 1, will be known as the "Princess Mary Ward," Her Royal Highness having endowed it with a portion of the funds subscribed by the peoples of the Gold Coast as a wedding present on the occasion of her recent marriage.



— GOLD COAST HOSPITAL. ACCRA. —

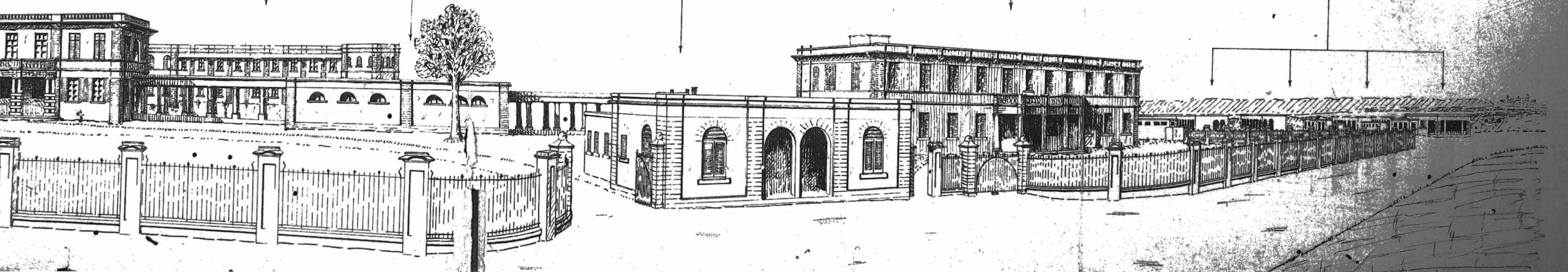
• GENERAL WARDS  
FRONT BLOCK, RIGHT WING.

CLOTHING  
STORE & ETC.

• PORTERS LODGE  
& HAND AMBULANCE.

OUTPATIENTS  
BLOCK.

NATIVE STAFF  
QUARTERS.



NURSING SISTERS'  
QUARTERS.

R. M. O'S  
QUARTERS

MOTOR AMBULANCE.

