

Bugbrooke in the Great War - A Nurse's Story

We already know of over 150 men with a connection to Bugbrooke who volunteered during the First World War, many of them early on, before the full horror of trench warfare was realised. But women also became involved in the war in some way, especially as it dragged on. However, some had volunteered early on, just as the young men had – one of these was local girl Evelyn Moore.

Evelyn Moore was the daughter of successful local farmer John Moore and his wife Harriett West Moore (née Kenning). Evelyn (or Eva as she was known informally) was born on 29 December 1874 in Bugbrooke, the second of six children. Clearly well-educated, she had qualified as a nurse at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading, Berkshire, where she was resident in the nurses' home in 1901. In 1911 she was living in lodgings at Goring-on-Thames while still employed as a nurse at that same hospital.

Very shortly after the outbreak of war, on 7 August 1914 Evelyn volunteered to serve as a nurse and was accepted into Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, allocated to its Reserve for the duration of the war (QAIMNSR). Just one week later, on 14 August, Evelyn reported for duty at the established Military General Hospital at Shorncliffe on the Kent coast. This site expanded rapidly as it was the main port of arrival for casualties from the Western Front. It was also the nearest port of entry for Belgian and French refugees, and later was the holding camp for Canadian forces entering the war and the site of a new Canadian General Hospital. Evelyn wrote home to her mother in Bugbrooke at least twice during the early period and fortunately the text of the letters has been preserved by the school. From these we know that she was involved in the treatment of officer casualties and that she saw a large number of civilian refugees in a pitiable state.



However, Evelyn was to miss much of the later expansion for she was posted to the Middle East, ready for promotion to Sister. She joined the Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle* (a former Castle Line passenger liner) at Southampton and sailed for Egypt on 1 November, only arriving at Alexandria on 4 June 1915. *En route*, she had as expected been appointed Sister, from 5 November.

Evelyn spent the remainder of the war in the Middle East, serving at General Hospitals in Alexandria, Basra and Baghdad, but also making at least one return trip to Southampton in *Gloucester Castle* (later torpedoed, on 30 March 1917). She also had three separate periods in hospital herself, the last in India with 'flu. Evelyn returned to England

on 19 February 1919 for well-deserved leave, followed by demobilisation on 26 March.

Sister Evelyn Moore, ARRC, QAIMNSR, the
Northampton Independent, 18 September 1915



She was twice Mentioned in Despatches and was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 2nd Class [or Associate] (post-nominal ARRC), “For Distinguished Service in the Field” as announced in the *London Gazette* Supplement of 2 May 1916, at page 4429.

Evelyn had qualified for the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal (with bronze oak leaf emblem, denoting the ‘mentions’) to accompany her ARRC (an example pictured, left).

Her father had died on 9 July 1904 and sadly her mother died on 2 September 1916 while Evelyn was serving away from home, though she would by then have known of her daughter’s decoration. Both parents are buried in the local churchyard.

Evelyn gave Bugbrooke as her demobilisation address, though her official next-of-kin was her younger brother Frank, who was living in London by then. She apparently did not return to nursing and on 3 November 1924 married childless and widowed local farmer Thomas Brittain Harris from Fosters Booth, ten years her senior. He died on 18 February 1937, aged 73, while the widow Evelyn lived on in Fosters Booth, until she died in hospital in Daventry on 24 January 1963, aged 88.

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