

Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Bear Wood.



AMONG the many hospitals in England devoted to the care and restoration of convalescent soldiers none can be more admirably suitable than that which bears the name of the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Bear Wood, Wokingham, Berkshire.

The Origin.

It was in the month of August, 1915, the close of the first year of War, that, the need being urgent for recuperative centres for Convalescent Soldiers, this delectable spot became the temporary home of the Canadians. A letter had been received on August 8, 1915, by Sir R. L. Borden from Major A. Laphthorn Smith, R.A.M.C., a well-known surgeon of Montreal, stating that in conversation one day with Sir Thomas Galway, Surgeon-General, R.A.M.C., the question had arisen regarding the need on the part of the Canadians of a place that would serve as a Soldiers' Convalescent Home. Sir Thomas had informed him that Mr. Walter, of *The Times*, would be proud to lend his magnificent home called "Bear Wood Park," free of any charge, for such a worthy undertaking. Accordingly, Major Laphthorn Smith was requested to obtain the authority of Mr. Walter to inspect the place, the result being that a permit was secured for this purpose. Major Smith kindly offered to accompany the Canadian representative, Major Doherty, on a tour of inspection of the building and grounds. The report which the latter sent to the D.M.S., Canadians, was as follows :—

"Bear Wood Park Mansion is a very large brick house, and would accommodate 300 patients without any crowding; recently 700 troops were quartered in this building. It is supplied with water by two tanks, one of 6,000, the other of 5,000 gallons capacity, the latter being fed by a reservoir of much larger capacity. The outbuildings are very fine, and in these 100 men could easily be accommodated."

The D.M.S. immediately secured the authority of Major-General The Hon. Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, to accept the generous offer of Mr. Walter, and submitted a requisition for the necessary furniture and the equipment for 625 beds.

On August 27 a Board of Officers visited Bear Wood Park, to ascertain the feasibility of erecting huts near the house, and after consultation with Mrs. Walter, senior, Capt. McCombe, C.A.M.C., and H. S. Fellowes, Lieut., C.E., reported to the D.M.S. that Mrs. Walter was anxious that the ballroom and large room adjoining, together with bedroom immediately above, should be retained for storage of furniture under lock and key.

It was ascertained through Mr. Walter's agent that Mr. Walter was willing to loan his place gratis to the Canadians, the only stipulation being that the taxes and insurance be paid by them, and that, when they vacated it, it should be left in unimpaired condition.

Historical.

At this point, it would not seem amiss to give a short descriptive history of the place itself, and for this portion of our sketch we are indebted to the Rev. Peter H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A., Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

"The Mansion of Bear Wood, the seat of the Walter Family, who are known to the world as the proprietors of *The Times* newspaper, is situate in a part of the old forest of Windsor. This forest covers a large tract of ground and was the favourite hunting ground of the Kings of England from Norman times. When James the