

Ambulance Service

During the later part of 1898, the Bacup Corps was formed first aid classes having been held since about 1886. Classes were held in various venues including the Railway Station and the Co-operative hall however on the 10th February 1891 students were invited to attend a meeting the following week at the Mechanics Institute. Following this meeting, a room was rented at Newgate Mission for the purpose of holding drills. The Surgeon in charge was Dr Howard Harris and the drill instructor was Sgt W Cork.



N Woodhouse was one of the originators of the Ambulance Brigade in Bacup he began learning ambulance in 1888 during a class held by Dr Harris in the Co-operative hall acquiring his certificate qualifying him to render first aid in November 1888. With an increase in members, the rooms at Newgate became too small and so an alternative room was found at Barkers Foundry which was where the Royal Court Theatre is today.

After various other, the Bacup Nursing Division was formed in April 1898 and more suitable premises were found over the offices of the School Board offices in Rochdale Road with Dr Barclay as Surgeon in Charge. On the 27th July 1901 a Trades and Societies Demonstration was held to raise money to purchase a horse ambulance.

In November a presentation took place on the Market Ground at Bacup where Mr John Harland Chief Constable formally presented the ambulance to the Borough. The total cost of the ambulance and harness was £150.8s as well as containing two stretchers and appliances the ambulance had been constructed to be as lively and bright as it possibly could be due the knowledge that in other parts of the country the sombre looking ambulances had put people off using them in case they took them to the cemetery instead of the infirmary. During 1904 the horse ambulance was called out 13 times whilst the hand litter was called out to 22 cases.



As was the case in other areas members of St John's Ambulance and Nursing Divisions played an important role during wartime. Many members of the St Johns Ambulance went off to the South African War of 1900 and when the Great War began in 1914 and sadly like many others lost their life.



Elizabeth Rushton and Rowland her brother who both saw service during the Great War

A memorial in the ambulance hall was dedicated to the memory of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice such as Tom Peat who died in Middleburgh Hospital, South Africa on November, 17th 1901 and to those in the Great War, Great War 1914-1918, Sgt A. W. Townsend, Pte. Robert Ashton, Pte. Henry Chesteney, Pte. John Greenwood Pte. David Hargreaves, Pte. John G. Heyworth, Pte. James E. Mitchell, Pte. Edgar Pickles.

Fern Hill Military Auxillary Hospital, Stacksteads was staffed during the First World War with nurses from the local contingents.



A new Vulcan Motor Ambulance was presented to the Borough and placed under the control of the police in 1917 with regulations drawn up for the use of it.



People wishing to use the ambulance for cases that didn't follow an accident had to obtain a form from the Chief Constable to fill in along with a doctor's certificate a reasonable time before the ambulance was required. In the case of an accident application to use the ambulance had to be made through the Police station either in person or by calling the station by telephone by dialling the number 32.



The Bacup St John Ambulance Brigade and Nursing Division had been fundraising for several years in order to be able to build a hall for the use of the brigade. At the time of the stone laying ceremony, which took place on the 30th June 1930, the Bacup contingent had 2500 members. Built by Mr J Clayton, with joinery work carried out by J. W. Sutcliffe's joiners, the hall was renovated in 1965 and as well as carrying out its original function the room was used to hold ballroom dances twice weekly with 50/50 dancing on Wednesday and ballroom on Sunday evenings. The hall was destroyed by a gas explosion in November 1984.



Stacksteads Ambulance station was opened on Commercial Street, a new purpose-built ambulance station based in what was the Territorial Drill Hall in April 1953. During the Second World War part of the building was used as a meat cold storage depot. The station housed five ambulances and three utility vehicles.

