

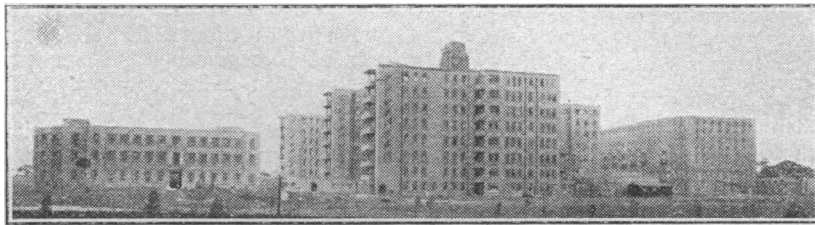
THE BIRMINGHAM HOSPITALS CENTRE

ROYAL OPENING CEREMONY

The opening of the Birmingham Hospitals Centre and the Medical School Buildings of the University by the Duke of Gloucester on July 14 sets the seal upon a great enterprise which was first mooted eighteen years ago.

The new buildings at Edgbaston, two miles from the centre of the city, on open ground 500 feet above sea level, and just to the north-west of the University, make an inspiring group even now, although the scheme is far from complete. Nothing has been spent in useless adornment, but the very simplicity of the treatment and the harmonious massing of the several buildings give it all the needful dignity. The three main structures—the hospital itself, the nurses' home to the north, and the medical school buildings to the south—fit in perfectly with one another, so that the eye is satisfied from every aspect. All the buildings are in a yellowish-grey stone, disappointing at first glance when compared with the warm red of the University a few hundred yards away, and yet not unpleasing. On three sides of the hospital stone balconies have been constructed on every floor of the medical and surgical wings for the outdoor treatment of as many patients as possible, and these give a decorative relief to the plain wall surfaces.

Evidently the scheme owes something in its architectural conception to the Medical Centre of New York City in which many hospitals and schools are associated; but there the emphasis is on the perpendicular

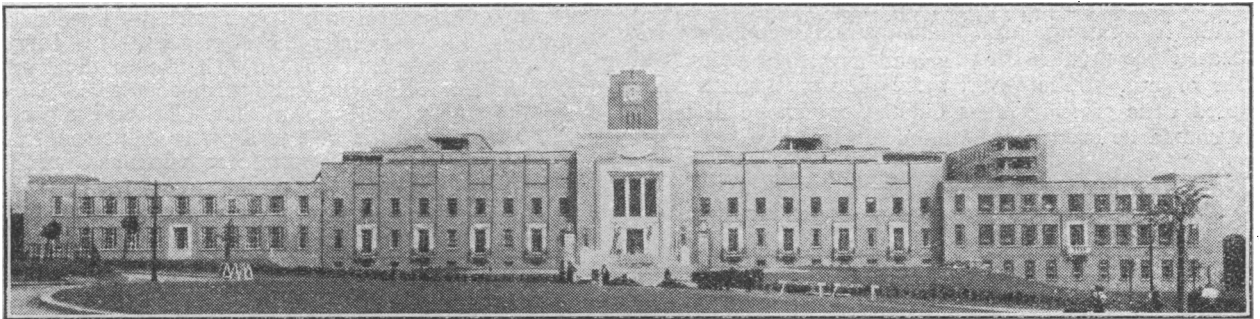


Side View of Hospital and Nurses' Home.

the clock tower, which serves the utilitarian purpose of water storage. The medical wing to the east of this block is also complete, as is the surgical block to the west with the exception of one of the forward projections. There remain to be added, on the west side, a casualty department and ward and the large out-patients' department, and, on the east, a paying patients' block of 100 beds; also, to project from the centre of the building southwards, the chapel. Opposite the principal entrance to the hospital (north), on the other side of the fine roadway, is the nurses' home, a large seven-storied structure, which when complete will have on the one side of it a smaller night wing, and on the other a home for the hospital maids. A dispensary is at present being built as a link between the surgical wing and the out-patient department.

The New Medical School

To the south of the hospital, at a lower elevation, separated by a wide and pleasant court and garden space, which will be used for convalescent patients, are the Medical School Buildings. These are only two, or in some parts three, stories in height, so that they do not rob the hospital of any sunshine. But the main frontage extends for a full 600 feet. On either side of the entrance block is a square of buildings surrounding an open central court. If these school buildings stood by themselves they would be regarded as a triumph of architecture; they are dwarfed, however, by the great mass of the hospital behind them. On one side are located the anatomy and physiology departments and on the other those of bacteriology and pathology, and the museum and library overlook the road leading to the University. Three well-equipped



Medical School South Frontage with Hospital Clock Tower beyond.

line, whereas at Birmingham it is on the horizontal. The hospital building is of seven and eight stories, as compared with the twenty-two stories of the Presbyterian Hospital, the original unit of the New York Centre. The architects, who submitted the winning design in open competition, are Messrs. Lanchester and Lodge of Bedford Square, London. Mr. H. V. Lanchester is the designer of the University of Leeds, the Cardiff municipal buildings, and the reconstruction of St. Bartholomew's.

The First Instalment

The buildings which have been opened this week are a first instalment. Much remains to be added before the Centre corresponds fully with the architects' original plan. The new hospital at present will provide just over 500 beds, whereas the completed hospital is planned to accommodate 740. The buildings so far finished and opened include the central administrative block, with offices, stores, and large central kitchens, dominated by

lecture theatres have been provided, and there are large laboratories for each of the four principal sections. The building was still in the workmen's hands on the occasion of our visit, but it was evident that teachers and students will enjoy every accommodation and facility. Covered ways and corridors connect the medical school with the hospital.

Internal Hospital Arrangements

The 500-bed hospital now opened, although ultimately the bed accommodation will be increased to half as much again, is nevertheless complete with all auxiliary and ancillary services. It embodies the latest ideas and experience in design, planning, and administration. The beds are to be organized in units of sixty, each unit being complete in itself. Of the sixty beds, thirty will be for men and thirty for women; each thirty will be made up of one ward of sixteen beds, two of four beds, and three of two beds. The largest ward in the hospital will not

have more than sixteen beds. There will be six general operating theatres—one on the floor of each of the surgical units—as well as departments for massage and remedial exercises, x rays and radium, electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, and other special purposes. The beds as far as possible are being arranged parallel to the windows instead of in the usual right-angle position, and the heads of the beds are against partition screens projecting into the ward some eight feet from the wall. It is intended that each member of the senior staff shall be assigned one of the units of sixty beds, with accessory services, clinical laboratory, record room, and so forth. When the completed hospital is functioning, of the 740 beds, 240 will be medical, 300 surgical, 60 children's, 60 gynaecological and obstetric, 60 special (ear, nose, and throat, ophthalmic, dermatological), and 20 casualty. In addition there will be the 100 beds in the paying patients' block, still to be constructed. Fifty of these beds will be in single rooms. This block will be so related to the hospital that all essential services may be obtained with the least inconvenience to the patients.

The nurses' home, when the night wing is added, will accommodate 460 nurses, giving each of them a separate bedroom. There will be separate bedrooms also in the maids' home for 100 maids. Part of the nurses' home will be a training school, with lecture theatre and demonstration rooms.

It should be added that it is expected that it will be October, or November before the Centre opens for the first instalment of patients. The Birmingham United Hospital (the General Hospital and Queen's) is undertaking without avoidable delay the responsibility for the new buildings and service, but the speed is necessarily regulated by rate of recruitment of nursing and domestic staff. To provide an entirely new and complete organization to full capacity will take some time, especially in a hospital of such modern design and containing all the numerous departments connected with the special needs of a medical school.

The Finance of the Scheme

On the financial side the Centre, being a unified institution, not one hospital appealing against others with competing claims, has been fortunate in enlisting the enthusiastic support of the whole community. The civic authorities, headed by successive Lord Mayors since the appeal began in 1930, have been particularly co-operative. The cost of the scheme with the 740-bed hospital is one and a quarter millions, one million of which represents the cost of the present first instalment. That million, to within the last £30,000, has been secured. A few days before the opening the Lord Mayor received a letter from an anonymous well-wisher promising £10,000 to cover certain additional items of expenditure if the outstanding £30,000 were forthcoming. Thanks largely to the efforts of the secretary of the Centre, Captain J. E. Stone, whose writings on hospital administration are well known in the hospital world, the appeal expenses represent just under 1 per cent. One-sixth of the amount of the appeal fund is credited to the University for the building of the school, the maintenance of which is the University's responsibility, no part of the expenditure falling upon the hospital authorities. When the University, a few days before the opening, marked the occasion by conferring certain honorary degrees, it was mentioned that Lord Nuffield, who received the degree of Doctor of Law, had been the chief contributor, and next to him the largest single subscriber had been Mr. Harry Vincent, a Birmingham business man, for eight years the honorary treasurer of the appeal and one of the hardest workers on its behalf.

The words of Dr. Robert Hutchison, President of the Royal College of Physicians of London (who with Sir Cuthbert Wallace, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and Sir Edward Mellanby, Secretary of the Medical Research Council, also received honorary degrees), on the same occasion may be quoted:

"It [the idea of forming the Hospitals Centre] was an idea of great imagination carried out with all the practicality one expects in Birmingham, and I am sure it will not fail not only to facilitate the treatment of the sick but also to improve the teaching of the student and extend the facilities for research. It cannot fail to enhance still further the already high reputation of Birmingham as a teaching centre. Those who practise in the metropolis with its woefully scattered medical resources view not only with satisfaction but with a considerable degree of envy Birmingham's Hospitals Centre. I believe that the example you have set here to medicine in the concentration of medical resources in one quarter cannot fail to be widely followed in other cities."

Opening by the Duke of Gloucester

The arrangements for the royal opening on Thursday of this week had to be revised owing to the illness of the King, in whose place the Duke of Gloucester, accompanied by the Duchess, performed the ceremony. The spaciousness of the setting permitted 8,000 people to be present. It was arranged that the Duke and Duchess, driving from New Street station, should spend exactly one hour at the Centre, first entering the Nurses' Home, where certain presentations were to be made by Sir Charles Grant Robertson, chairman of the Executive Board of the Centre and Vice-Chancellor of the University. The list of presentations here included members and officials of the Board, representatives of the architects, engineers, contractors, and works staff, the house governor and matron, and members of the honorary medical staff of Birmingham United Hospital. After the presentation of an address by the Lord Mayor, Their Royal Highnesses proceeded to the main door of the administrative block, opened with a key presented to the Duke by the architect, and then, passing through the vestibule, visited one of the large general wards of sixteen beds and an operating theatre. The further programme included an inspection of the buildings of the Medical School, where the Chancellor of the University, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, presented the Dean of the Faculty (Dr. Stanley Barnes), the professors, and other officers.

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NATIONAL FOOD POLICY

Within recent weeks two documents have been published which bring into prominence the imperative need for a national food policy planned not only to safeguard the health of every citizen in times of peace but his existence in times of war. The first is a *Report on Nutrition*,¹ issued by the British Association for Labour Legislation. "It is an effort to carry out the instructions of the Assembly of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization to the various nations of the world to study the problem in their own country." It sets out clearly and concisely the relevant facts in regard to this problem as it exists in Great Britain. An outstanding feature of the report, and one that lends to it a high value, is the emphasis laid on the relation of British agriculture to national health: a relationship which is, we consider, fundamental to the whole health question.

The second document is a special report, entitled "Towards a National Food Policy," issued by the Committee against Malnutrition,² and recommended to public attention by a number of authorities on the subject of nutrition. It emphasizes the need for adjustment of national economy towards the provision of an adequate guaranteed

¹ Obtainable from the Hon. Secretary, 55, St. Mary's Mansions, Paddington, W.2. (Pp. 118; price 1s. 6d.)

² Bulletin No. 27, July, 1938. 19c, Eagle Street, Holborn, London, W.C.1.