

FRANCE  
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# V.A.D.

NURSING MEMBERS, COOKS, KITCHEN-MAIDS,  
CLERKS, HOUSE-MAIDS, WARD-MAIDS,  
LAUNDRESSES, MOTOR-DRIVERS, ETC.

**ARE URGENTLY NEEDED**

APPLICATION TO BE MADE TO

## **VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENTS**

Also known as VADs, these units were made up of members of the British Red Cross and the Order of St John. They provided nursing services, mainly to hospitals.

After war broke out it was evident that the military hospitals would not be adequate for the numbers of casualties expected. The War Office turned to the Red Cross to establish auxiliary hospitals run by volunteers.

The VADs in Devon had been highly active in recruiting volunteers before the war started and as a result, hospitals were swiftly mobilised. By the end of 1914 there were sixteen in the county, including Knightshayes House.

The term VAD was also a term used for an individual member such as a nurse.

## **HALBERTON NURSES**

In the parish we know of three VAD nurses who served during the war.

***Winifred English*** volunteered at the Military Hospital at Topsham Road, Exeter

***Nancy Gray Izat***, daughter of Captain and Mrs Izat of Alstree House, worked at the No. 5 Hospital in Exeter before transferring to the Bath Military Hospital in April 1918.

***Kate Elizabeth Le Riche*** volunteered at Knightshayes VAD Hospital for a period of ten months in 1915.

We also know of ***Christine Pearce***, daughter of Mrs Pearce of Halberton Court who worked at the King's Military Hospital in London. In the King's Honours in 1916 she was decorated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class of the British Red Cross for distinguished services to the war.

## **NURSE LE RICHE**

Kate Elizabeth Le Riche from Ash Thomas volunteered her services as a nurse at Knightshayes House. It had been mobilised as an auxiliary hospital to offer treatment and recuperation for servicemen. The family was living upstairs and Lady Alexandra Amory had taken on a supervisory role as Matron

Nurse Le Riche was born Kate Elizabeth Mildon in 1869. She was the daughter of Robert Mildon a farmer, surveyor and estate agent living at Bradley House, Ash Thomas. In 1892 at the age of 22 she married Samuel Le Riche, a merchant from St Helier, Jersey at St Andrew's Church in Halberton. By 1901 she was widowed. She died in 1947.

## **AUTOGRAPH BOOK**

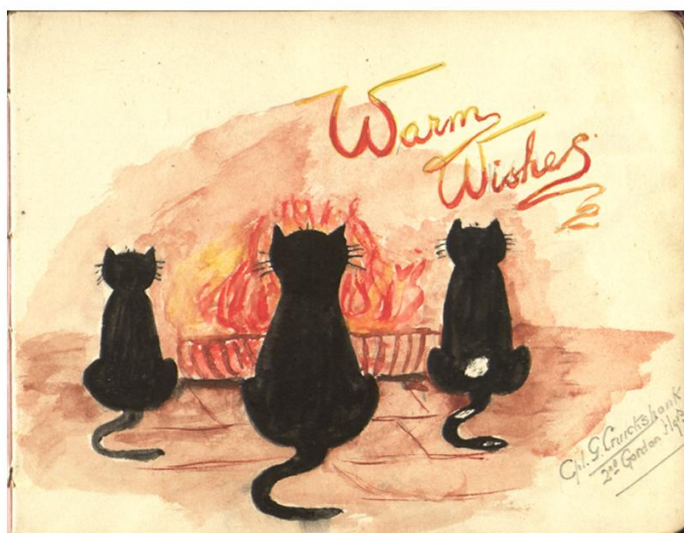
Nurse Le Riche kept an autograph book during her time at Knightshayes Hospital. This holds contributions from the 92 soldiers who stayed at the hospital which include poems, illustrations and notes.

It was not uncommon for soldiers to draw or paint a picture of the owner of the book they would write in and we believe some of the images are of Kate herself.

The book is now the property of the National Trust having been donated by the family. We hope to have the opportunity to see and record more of the pages in the future. Three examples of entries are reproduced below:



My greatest thanks to Nurse Le Prie  
for her kindness to me while staying  
at Knightsbridge V.A. Hospital.  
As friends we met as friends we part  
Bomber H. Gudlin 1433  
C/119. R.F.A.



## **WINIFRED ENGLISH**

Winifred English was the youngest daughter of army major Joseph Oxley English and his wife Florence who lived at the Priory. She was a member of the Tiverton VAD of the Red Cross.

In early 1915 an epidemic of influenza was raging at Topsham Barracks. The military hospital at Higher Barracks was so full that some 200 men were being cared for in draughty huts. In haste an old building was re-commissioned and VAD nurses supplied to staff it.

**One of these was Winifred English. Tragically within only five days of arrival she was taken ill herself and died three weeks later of pneumonia, at the early age of 25.**





## **WOUNDED SOLDIERS WEARING HOSPITAL UNIFORM AT KNIGHTSHAYES HOSPITAL**

**BLUE JACKET WITH A WHITE LINING, BLUE TROUSERS, WHITE SHIRT AND A RED TIE  
WORN WITH THEIR OWN KHAKI SERVICE CAP**