

# ADVANCED DRESSING STATION

by Peter Wright

Although the subject of this short article is not directly linked to the flying services, it is included because Advanced Dressing Stations would have been the first port of call for wounded pilots and observers who were brought down within the front lines and the work of the ADS staff is something that has received little attention.

**A**LONG THE BRITISH FRONT LINE, through Belgium and France, there were established units of medical aid, known as Advanced Dressing Stations. Here would be sent wounded soldiers, each for a preliminary examination as to the nature and extent of their wounds, and also men who fell out on marches or during fighting. On rare occasions, RFC/RAF pilots or observers, would also be brought in if wounded, having luckily survived after attack-damage and injuries with the machine force-landed on our side of the lines.

Each ADS was commanded and supervised by an officer of Captain rank. Usually, these officers were ex-medical doctors from civilian or hospital life. Such a man was Captain Donald Ewart Morley, a pre-war doctor from Barton-on-Humber in Yorkshire.

He had moved to London and, enlisting in 1917, did his military doctor training at a unit on Salisbury Plain. He was then appointed to the London Receiving Hospital in Whitechapel, where he was the Receiving Officer, supervising where the incoming casualties would be sent for treatment.

In August 1917, he was posted over to France to the Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station, in the Ypres Salient. This establishment had been set-up in mid-1915, lying alongside the Essex Farm Cemetery, north of Ypres. It was located on the western bank of the Ypres-Yser Canal, and was formed from and into the canal spoil-bank.

Later, the ADS was extended eastwards, as allied units occupied that ground. Captain Morley's identification code name for his unit, was 'MAROC', an abbreviation of the nearby Marocca Farm (see map). His unit was the 16th Field Ambulance RAMC.

Luckily, we have been privileged to see and read some pages from Captain Morley's Field Message Book (Army Form 153). A few remarks by him show how the unit was run.

*Ref 26762 Pte Cook J. W., 14th Durham Light Infantry, attached 12th Field Coy, Royal Engineers, 28 August 1917. Statement by eye-witness 45558 Pte Jones R. I was standing beside Pte Cook, who took out his rifle magazine, picked up a brush and began to clean his rifle. I turned round to speak to a chap in the trench, and I heard a rifle shot. I turned round and saw Cook holding his hand, and blood was trickling from it.*

This was a typical happening of a possible self-inflicted wound charge. The Captain had to report it. There were many other events recorded and reported. He had to indent for various items for the ADS, things like candles, salt, suet, soda, tea 4-lbs, sugar and brandy (1pint!).

At times, they were under-fire at MAROC, and one pithy note reads *when the shelling stops, I advise you to proceed slowly, with your men keeping-on gas helmets*. The enemy were using mustard gas at the time, during the 2nd Battle of Ypres.

In late 1917, Captain Morley was withdrawn from his ADS, and posted-out to Mesopotamia. He travelled aboard HM

*Captain Morley and his future wife. Note the German 'pickelhaube' helmet and bayonet on the garden table; presumably these were souvenirs that Morley had acquired during his time in France and Belgium.*

