

Dame Margot Turner

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Dame Margot Turner was held yesterday at the Royal Garrison Church, of All Saints, Aldershot. The Rev Anthony Appleby officiated, assisted by Mgr J. O'Sullivan. Major D. Quarington-Wilson, QARANC, read the lesson and Brig H.S. Dixon-Nuttall, Director of Army Nursing, read *A Prisoner's Thanksgiving* by Miss Olga Neubrunner. The address was given by Col D.G.M. Anderson, Colonel Commandant, QARANC.

Among those present were: Col and Mrs P.R.H. Turner (brother and sister-in-law); Mr and Mrs David Turner, Mr and Mrs Dudley Holme Turner, Miss Georgina Turner, Mr and Mrs T. Michael Turner, Mr and Mrs Christopher Turner, Mr and Mrs Nicholas Turner, Mr and Mrs Thomas Rikard-Bell, Mrs Peter Rikard-Bell, Mrs Richard Rimmer, Miss Julia Rimmer, Mr Mark Rimmer.

Brig the Hon Dame Mary Pihl, the Hon Mrs Mole, Dame Joanna Kelleher, Lt-Gen Sir Peter Beale, Surgeon General, and Lady Beale, Maj-Gen H.P. Craig, Commander, Medical United Kingdom Land Forces; Brig C.D. Parkinson, Director of Army Dental Services, and Mrs Parkinson, Mr G. Downs, representing the Royal British Legion, Mr H.C. Payne, representing Far East Prisoners of War, Miss C.M. King, Matron, St Dunstan's, Brighton, and representatives of the Burma Star Association, together with many former colleagues, serving officers and friends.

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The nurse who survived to save others

Obituary

Dame Margot Turner

THE DEATH of Brigadier Dame Margot Turner at the age of 83 has closed a truly astonishing career. After training as a nurse at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London she joined Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service in 1937. Before retirement in 1968 she had risen to become matron in chief of the renamed Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and director of army nursing services. What happened in the years between makes her story not simply one of career advancement but an outstanding example of endurance and courage. She was nursing in a military hospital in Malaya when the Japanese armies invaded in 1941. After the collapse of Singapore in February 1942 she was directed with other nurses to board the *Kuala*, a small ship that was already heavily overloaded with people seeking to escape the Japanese. It was even then too late. Singapore harbour was in flames and enemy planes had command of the air. The *Kuala* was spotted the next day as it sought to navigate the Luigga archipelago and was sunk with heavy loss of life. Despite adverse currents, Sister Turner, as she was then, managed to swim to an island close by with her survivors. When a rescue ship arrived three days later to take off the wounded she was one of the nurses that accompanied them. Before the night was out this ship

too lay at the bottom of the sea, sunk by the Japanese. Sister Turner, helped the survivors, some of them children, to reach a raft but when daybreak came many had lost their hold and slipped away. Eventually only Sister Turner and one other woman remained. When that woman overbalanced and fell into the sea, Margot was alone on an empty ocean under a blistering tropical sun. She kept herself alive by catching rain in the lid of her powder compact and eating a little seaweed. Four days later she was spotted by a Japanese destroyer and hoisted aboard, burnt black by the sun and more dead than alive.

She survived to endure three and a half years in captivity, six months with three other nurses in a jail among thieves and murderers, who stared in amazement to see European women sharing their in sanitary conditions. The rest of her internment was spent in various camps in Sumatra in steadily worsening conditions, where beriberi, malaria, dysentery and malnutrition claimed many lives.

The dropping of the atomic bomb brought an end to the suffering. The women were taken back to Singapore for medical treatment at the Alexandra Hospital, which was now staffed with British doctors and nurses. The matron, who had trained with Margot Turner at Bart's, could scarcely believe that this gaunt woman with two teeth missing (Margot had been too slow in bowing to a Japanese soldier) was the healthy girl she remembered.

Nevertheless, Margot Turner was mentally fit and cheerful. On her return to England after sick leave she reported back for duty. Her health restored, she resumed her interest in sport, being no mean tennis player. Postings abroad



Dame Margot Turner . . . a wartime story of outstanding courage

followed. She served in Malta, Benghazi, Cyprus, Germany and Bermuda. Then came courses in administration in the Corps, all fitting her for that ultimate accolade.

She was a modest, straightforward woman, seeking no personal acclaim or attention. Her guidelines were simple: she saw what needed to be done and did it. Sustained by a strong religious belief she was able to put the past behind her without nurturing a festering bitterness. It says much for her character that she was able to resume normal life after the trauma suffered in captivity and to continue

in her profession to reach the very summit as Brigadier Turner.

Always approachable and interested in any matters concerning the Corps, its association and its museum, Dame Margot was a familiar figure at all related functions until recently, when failing eyesight restricted her activities. Her name will always be remembered and honoured in the history of Queen Alexandra's Army Nursing Corps.

Brenda McBryde

Margot Turner, born May 10, 1910; died September 24, 1993

End of an era on royal site

THE SITE of Queen Victoria's old residence in Aldershot ended its second life as a nurses' training home on Thursday.

The old Royal Pavilion site in Farnborough Road has been used as the Training Centre for the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, opened by Queen Victoria's great, great, great granddaughter Princess Margaret 31 years ago.

But last Thursday, the QAs flag was lowered for the last time as the nurses moved out. The next day they officially linked with the Royal Army Medical Corps Training Group to form a new Army Medical Services Training Centre at Keogh Barracks, Mytchett.

Cloud

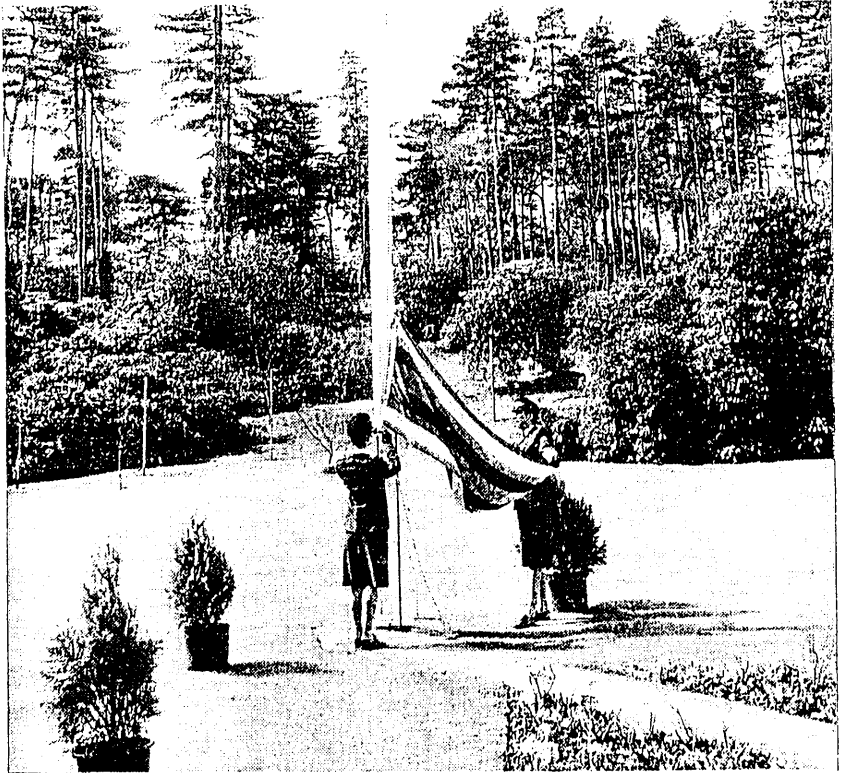
A bugler played the Last Post as RSM Marion Harley lowered the flag at a parade field in bright sunshine between showers. By coincidence, as the flag dropped a lark cloud passed briefly in front of the sun.

Now the barracks will be used as a temporary transit camp for Aldershot Garrison until new garrison accommodation is built.

The original Royal Pavilion was used by Queen Victoria whenever she reviewed her troops in Aldershot. Its magnificent grounds still exist as they were — personally designed by the Queen's Consort, Prince Albert, and containing all known species of rhododendron and trees from every part of the old British Empire that can grow in England.

It was on May 16, 1963, that Princess Margaret laid the foundation stone for the new Royal Pavilion barracks and she returned to officially open them on October 17, 1967.

Since then every new member of the QARANC has attended initial training and promotion courses there. It was because of Options for Change plans that recruiting left the barracks for Richfield in October, 1992.



The QA flag is lowered for the last time in the beautiful gardens of the old Royal Pavilion.

with promotion courses being sent to Keogh Barracks.

Many senior Army medical leaders attended the farewell parade. Among them were the Director-General of Army Medical Services, Major-Gen Brian Mayes; the Medical Commander of UK Land Forces, Major-Gen Peter Craig; Brigadier Hilary Dixon-Nuttall, the Director of Army Nursing Services; and the QAs Colonel Commandant, Col Di Anderson.

They watched silently as RSM Harley lowered the corps flag, which was then replaced by the Union Jack. RSM Harley handed the flag to her Training Centre Commandant, Col Jane Arigho, who in turn passed it over to Lt-Col Keith Martindale, Chief-of-Staff at the RAMC Training Group at Keogh.

"Throughout the years this centre has remained a self-sufficient training unit,

professionally organised and held in high esteem by all," said Col Arigho, who now becomes deputy commander of the Army Medical Services Training Centre, afterwards.

"It will not only be missed by the QARANC, but also by the civilian population of Aldershot which over the years has formed a bond of friendship with the unit.

"It is very sad. But it is the way ahead."

Search is on for foster parents

THE SEARCH is on in Surrey for people who can provide a caring home for children in need of fostering

During National Foster Care Week, which runs from April 17 to April 24, people who already foster children and Surrey County Council Social Services will be out

Surrey social services development manager Mr Simon Slater said: "We have about 520 children in our care and of those about 330 are fostered."