

Camp Columbia



Officers' Ward



Men treasure most highly the things that they have made by means of unrelenting toil, and there is a direct ratio between the effort expended and the time during which an accomplishment retains its value in the regard to the maker. In the annals of the Forty-Second General Hospital, the Convalescent Section at Camp Columbia is an outstanding example of the things that we who had a part in its development will remember longest; for it was built up by a small group who, by their unceasing efforts, accomplished a job that would normally have required a much greater personnel.

Almost as soon as the unit reached Brisbane, plans were developed for the setting-up of a General Hospital at Stuartholme, and part of the plan was for the procurement of an additional site whereby the required beds, under our Table of Organization, could be provided.

The Stuartholme Convent was situated on a steep hill and the land available for the construction of additional buildings was limited, not permitting the expansion of the hospital beyond the convent building itself. What ground was unoccupied was needed for the erecting of living quarters for officers, nurses and enlisted men.

On the road to Ipswich, twelve miles from Stuartholme, a camp had been set up,

Nurses' Staging Area.



Detachment Area.

Section Two

and several barracks had been built. It lay deep in the Australian "bush" and was occupied by a station hospital, a few enlisted men from the vicinity being the only patients. This was to be our Convalescent Section at Camp Columbia.

On 20 July 1942, the first group of officers, nurses and enlisted men set out from Stuartholme for their new assignment. Major W. K. Waller, the first officer-in-charge, led the group. Immediately upon arrival, the work of setting-up was started. Thus began an extensive building program which continued until the end of our occupancy and which resulted in an ideal camp hospital.

The Convalescent Section at Camp Columbia was an important part of our unit life from July 1942 until the entire unit consolidated its efforts under the "big top" at Holland Park in October 1943.

The transformation from a "Bush Camp" to an adequate and comfortable camp hospital required hard work, but the satisfaction in seeing the result stimulated uninterrupted effort. Thus, from a few wooden barracks and ward tents set amidst heavy underbrush, there arose an orderly hospital consisting of ward buildings equipped with plumbing and electric lights, and containing kitchens, offices, linen rooms and utility rooms. Ward tents were pitched over frames built on solid



New PX.



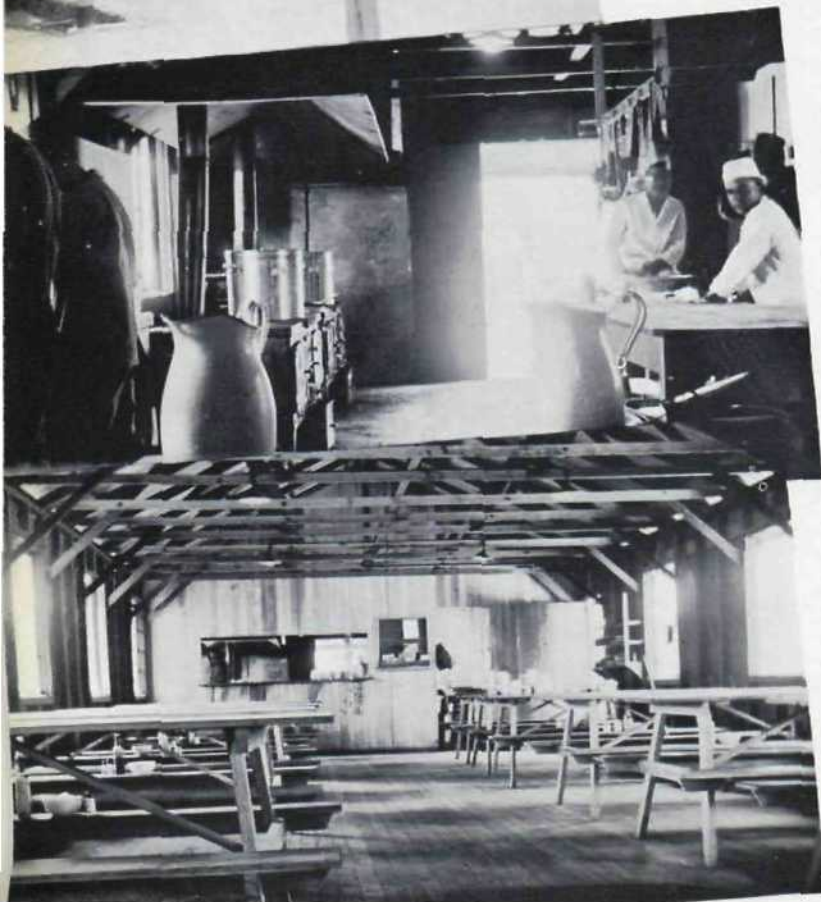
Ward Area.



Right: Ward Area.

Left: Lt. Oscar Jordan.





*Reading from top
to bottom:*

Old Mess Hall.

New Mess Hall.

*Outside Mess
Hall.*

Kitchen.

*Interior of Mess
Hall.*

flooring which was itself raised above the ground on foundation piles. The sides were screened, and screened door frames were built in. Thus, accommodations for seven hundred patients were provided, and the means for preparing quickly for many more were at hand. The mess hall which, in the beginning, was of barrack type construction, was enlarged to accommodate one thousand people, and contained a large, well-equipped kitchen, storage rooms, vegetable preparation room, butcher shop, pantry, rooms for dish and pan washing, and with excellent and entirely adequate refrigeration. As time passed, walks were constructed, and the camp began to assume the appearance of permanency.

An additional building program was drawn up that resulted in the construction of a fine surgical building, containing two large operating rooms and the necessary sterilization and scrub rooms. This building provided additional space for X-Ray and dental departments. Adjoining the surgery were buildings for the clinical laboratory and the department of physiotherapy. In this same period, a post-exchange building, including rooms for a barber shop and post office, was built. A large building for the American Red Cross was erected near the mess hall that provided adequate space for a reading room and game room, including offices and a kitchen. A new building was provided for the offices of administration.

In the last six months of our unit life at Columbia, provision was made for a nurses' staging area, and an average of five hundred nurses occupied the area during this period.

Patient strength fluctuated widely, but we were always busy and at one period the convalescent section contained eight hundred patients.

Taken altogether, life was good at Columbia. When the day for closing and departing arrived, many showed genuine regret. It was the end of a chapter but the testimony of hard work stood there in the Australian "Bush" and it had become a "little bit of home."

AN ENLISTED MAN'S STORY ABOUT CAMP COLUMBIA.

In July, 1942, two officers and a group of twenty-five enlisted men departed from Stuartholme and proceeded to the wilds of Camp Columbia to organize a Convalescent Section, to be Section II of the 42nd General Hospital, without any knowledge of what was in store for them.

Upon arrival at Camp Columbia, our first impression was one of complete despair. As we looked about we saw nothing but trees, thick undergrowth, and in some places swamps and marshes, from which came mosquitoes, flies, lizards, and all sorts of other insects in abundance to annoy us. This did not dampen our spirits, however, for our little group was going to start something of its own, and it would be just what we would make it. Five ward tents and four permanent buildings which were spread out in an area of one square mile were all with which we had to start our little project. These tents and buildings were all that was left by our predecessors, the 153rd Station Hospital.

When the set-up became a little more stable and safe, our first contingent of nurses arrived to give us some help with the patients who were coming in a steady flow, and also to rough it; they too did not know what was awaiting them, but they soon found out. They learned there was quite a difference between Stuartholme and Camp Columbia, but most of them agreed later that they liked the life at Columbia.

The evenings were extremely cold and damp, due to the heavy fog which enwrapped the camp in the early morning and evening hours. At first we had no recreation, with the exception of a ward tent the Red Cross fixed for the patients; a few shows were put on by the patients, and everyone enjoyed them very much. Later, the Mess Hall was used for the showing of movies. Everyone sprawled on the floor, or sat on the tables, for it was something new to have movies, but a little later we had them frequently.

Finally, after a period of clearing trees, underbrush, levelling acres of ground, building fences, walks, planting flowers, sowing grass and erecting tents, our little project began to expand into a tent city of beautiful flowers and rustic surroundings. With all of these improvements, the Detachment Area also improved and a recreation tent was erected for the use of the Detachment. Much



*Reading from top
to bottom:*

Chopping Wood.

Cooks and KP's.

*Open Air Wash
Stand.*

Ye Old Pump.

Ackman.

Wash Stand.





Above, left: Leaving for Columbia from Stuartholme.



Above, right: Peacock Alley.

Below, left: Nurses' Quarters.



Below, right: Interior of Nurses' room.



later, a very large circus tent was put up in a clearing and a complete stage, with footlights and all that goes with it was installed, and from then on there was plenty of life there.

As time went by, the Convalescent Section grew. A complete Surgery, Dental Clinic, Dispensary, additional wards and Mess Hall were built. Ramps were built joining the various buildings and because of the size of the Section, it gradually came to look something like a station hospital in the States.

Headaches really came our way, especially when a large number of patients arrived to fill our Malarial Section to capacity and over. Arrangements, however, were made for them and we had a Malarial Section consisting of eighteen ward tents in two even rows of nine tents each. After the first wave of malarial patients were cleared out and only a few

were being admitted, arrangements were made to hospitalize those few remaining patients in other wards, and then our troubles began. The Malarial Section was turned into a Nurses' Staging Area, with the chief nurse of the 28th Surgical Hospital in charge. The nurses of the 28th were attached to the Convalescent Section and performed regular duties with our own nurses.

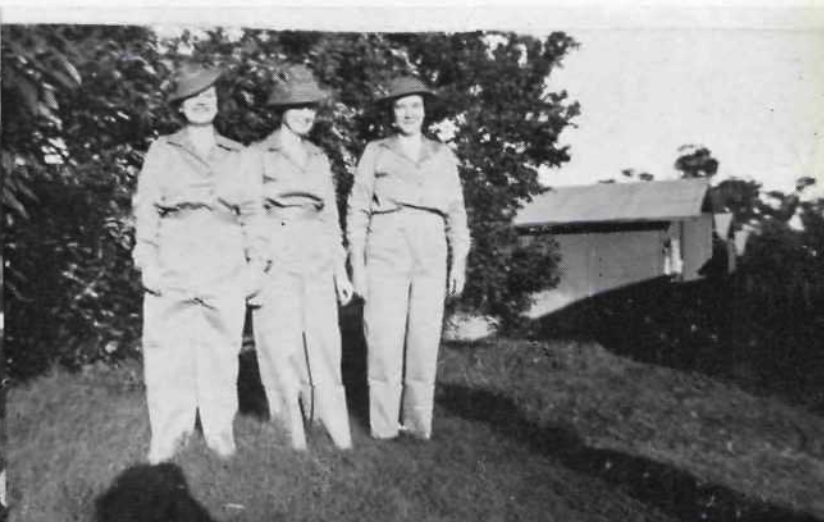
Nurses came and departed in large groups. Some of them were assigned to units and others were unassigned, but were awaiting orders. Evenings at the Nurses' Staging Area were as busy as New York's Times' Square. There were vehicles of all types, shapes and sizes pouring into Camp Columbia in a steady convoy, in fact, the vehicles were lined up from the Staging Area to the train station, a distance of approximately seven blocks.

Above, left: Miss Ramsburg.

Above, right: The night shift.

Below, left: Ward Tents.

Below, right: Ward S-8.



About three months prior to the closing of the Convalescent Section, a clearing was made and two screened ward tents were erected; all of the Detachment was wondering just what would be done with them, but a little later it was all cleared up; one of the tents was used for a Club, and for reading and writing. This offered an excellent place for the enlisted men to pass away the evenings by playing cards and enjoying liquid refreshment.

There were rumors for months that we would unite with the main unit and move to a new location, but it only seemed that they were rumors, because there was a different one each day, and it was believed that even the "powers" did not know just what was going to happen. Then almost as quickly as it had opened, the Convalescent Section closed. Peaceful and serene Columbia was

suddenly shaken by a whirlwind of activity and commotion. Steady streams of trucks and vehicles of all kinds made their appearance. The rumor that the various sections of the 42nd would unite ceased to be a rumor, and was a reality instead.

It was the Convalescent Section that received the word to "go" first. They were again picked by the Commanding Officer to pave the way and put into operation another hospital. Equipment and supplies were inventoried and then sent to Holland Park. As days went by, more supplies were sent out of Columbia until only the barest necessities were left to be moved. Finally on October 21, 1943, all the personnel of Section II. was en route to the new location. After setting up a temporary Headquarters, Receiving and Registrar Office, Supply and Wards, the new hospital began functioning at Holland Park.



New Ward Tents.

*Below: Headquarters Office.
Interior of New Ward.*



Cleaning Mess Gear.

Left: Malaria patients lined up for inspection.



Top, left: Receiving Office.

Top right: Recipients of Purple Heart Awards.



Bottom, left: Veterans of Buna Campaign.

Bottom, right: Rehabilitation by exercise.

Below: Rehabilitation program in action.



Lt. Jordan chopping wood.





Australian Lizard.

Game Hunting.

Ackman and Kookaburra.

Mascot—P-40.

Negro Entertainers.

Leg Show.

Base Section Band Concert.

A Comedy Sketch.



