

# Bishops Knoll War Hospital

This all came about because Bishops Knoll Wood is now in the care of the Woodland Trust. I have been a volunteer for them in Gloucestershire for 30 years. Recently I decided to move my volunteering to a property nearer to Bristol as it saves a lot of travelling which doesn't seem very green these days – especially with Bristol being Green Capital of Europe 2015. The wood was originally the garden of Bishops Knoll House and a bit of research turned up a very appropriate piece of history of the centenary of Anzac Day

During the First World War a number of wealthy families offered to turn their mansions into convalescent hospitals for wounded soldiers. Bishop's Knoll War Hospital stands apart as it was the only private hospital in the area permitted to accept patients direct from the front. It was to be used only by Australian soldiers, more than 2000 passed through its gates and its conversion, staffing and maintenance was entirely paid for by former Gloucestershire cricketer Robert Edwin Bush.

Robert Edwin Bush, like his brothers was educated at Clifton College. He was captain of the College's First XI and later played for Gloucestershire alongside the greatest cricketer of all time WG Grace. Bush emigrated to Western Australia in 1887 and became a very successful sheep farmer. On returning to Bristol as a multi millionaire in 1908 he and his second wife, Marjorie, took up residence at the beautiful Bishop's Knoll with its large gardens.

With the outbreak of war Bush wanted to play his part. Having made his fortune in Australia Bush wanted to repay the country that made him so wealthy, and so he immediately converted his house to a hospital to be used exclusively by Australian soldiers. Initially, the Australian authorities refused his offer and he had to accept all Empire casualties but he finally won his battle and after 1916 only Australian soldiers were treated at Bishop's Knoll.

Hundreds of Anzac soldiers came through the gates of the Knoll including Victoria Cross winner John Patrick Hamilton. The care, which was entirely funded by Bush, was reported as second to none with Bush himself working there as an orderly.

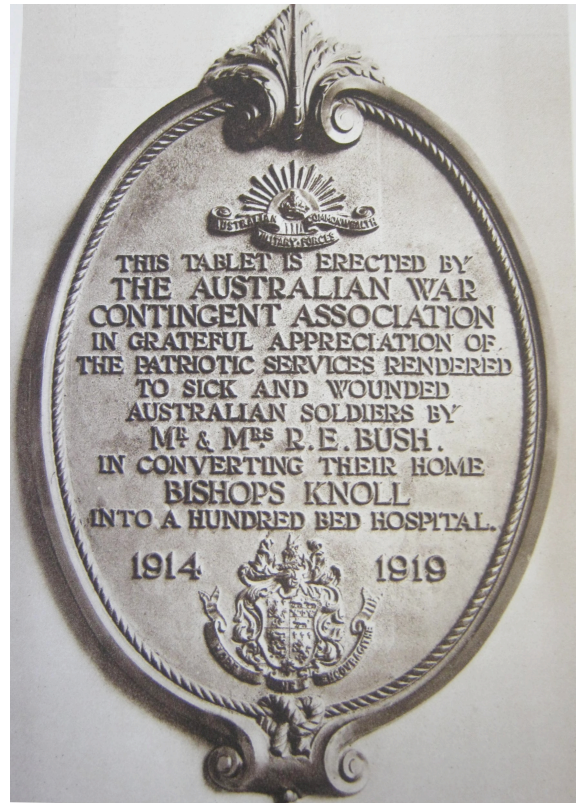
Following Bush's death in 1939 Bishops Knoll was bought by The Bristol Aeroplane Company and used as an apprentice school before being turned into the BRI school for nurses. In 1973 this once grand house was demolished replaced by flats. The plaque presented in 1919 recording its service as a WW1 Hospital was sent to the Australian War Museum in Canberra, however the Trust Volunteers are now attempting to get funding for a replica.

Robert Edwin and several member of the Bush family buried in Arnos Vale close to where 14 WW I Australians soldiers are buried. This year there will be a Centenary Anzac day Memorial Service there.

Chris Stephens



Robert Edwin Bush



The plaque now in Canberra



The house as it was in 1910