

Bishop's Knoll - Bristol's Lost Hospital

Another year - another book, well it is actually two years!

This one is the remarkable story of Robert Edwin Bush and his Bristol mansion which he converted into a 100-bed hospital for the duration of the First World War. The Bishop's Knoll mansion, now sadly demolished, was the home of this Bristol Victorian gentleman, educated at Clifton College who in 1877 sailed to Australia to seek his fortune. In addition to becoming a successful sheep farmer and influential politician he also was a founding vice-president of the Western Australia Cricket Association in Perth and was responsible for the WACA still used in Ashes Test matches. Bush a talented cricketer at school and captain of the College's first XI (Lilleywhite Schoolboy Cricketer of the year 1876) who in his last two years at Clifton also opened the batting for Gloucestershire with the legendary W. G. Grace



With the new book at the unveiling of the replica plaque with Bristol High Sheriff, Helen Wilde, Lt Col Arthur Tsamis of the Australian Defence Staff and Tessa Kerry, granddaughter of Robert Bush.

Having made his fortune he returned to Bristol and bought Bishop's Knoll. When WW1 broke out converted this mansion into a 100-bedded hospital for the treatment and recuperation of Australian soldiers wounded on the front line; more than 2,000 servicemen recovered there. This was all at his own cost, equivalent to £10M today



Bishop's Knoll as it was in 1916



Ward 1 in 1916

The garden of the house is now owned by the Woodland Trust and in August 2016 the Friends of Bishops Knoll Wood organised a replica of plaque which once adorned the hallway of the mansion. The original had been presented by the Australian War Contingent Association to Mr and Mrs Bush 1919 and is now in the Australian War Memorial at Canberra. We did ask for it back but they declined but instead offered to pay for our replica. This was unveiled at the Bishop's Knoll Woodland Trust site by Bristol High Sheriff, a fitting tribute to the extraordinary man and the work he and his wife carried out there during the First World War.



The "Friends of Bishops Knoll Wood" volunteers



The replica plaque

Bristol Record Office is currently running an exhibition about Robert Bush and his Bishop's Knoll WW1 hospital until 3 January 2017 and if you can spare £12 the full story is contained in

Bristol's Australian Pioneer is available from www.bristolbooks.organd all good bookshops!

Chris Stephens, October 2016