



Medicine: Stretcher cases

'Stretcher cases' were those who had to be carried on a stretcher because they were too ill or injured to walk. One such case was Private BC Mead. Some of his memories are below.

'For thirteen hours I lay on top with dead Germans for company until the arrival of bearers who carted me to healthier surroundings.'

While lying in a hospital bed at St John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples, Private Mead wrote:

'It has been a continual moving in motors, trains and stretchers, calling for indefinite periods at hospitals and clearing-stations where I made the acquaintance of operating theatres, x-rays, dressing rooms etc, finally landing today at the above address with visions of "Blighty" in a few days. But the fates decreed otherwise, and it seems likely I shall spend a few months on my back here prior to convalescing in England.

'The thigh bone of my left leg has been fractured by a bullet which went in one side and came out the other – the wound seems healthy, but the knitting of the bone will prove a tedious proceeding.

'It is bliss to be between sheets again and feel tolerably clean, so that I have compensations for the pain and discomfort attendant on the case. I suppose I am lucky to have got off as I have – the fate of so many of my friends does not bear thinking about.'

Private Mead arrived at the National Hospital, Queen's Square, London on 27 July 1916. He was discharged as no longer physically fit for war service on 26 February 1917.