

HISTORICAL FACTSHEET No 7

The Baschurch Home

In 1900 Agnes Hunt's formidable mother decided to move into Florence House, a large property in the centre of Baschurch village, not far from the Hunt family home at Boreatton Park. Her intention was to open it as a convalescent home for the Salop Infirmary, to be run by Agnes and her friend and fellow nurse Emily Goodford. The house had been empty for a number of years, but after much preparation two large upstairs rooms were furnished as wards. A Management Committee, drawn from Agnes Hunt's friends and family, met for the first time on 1 October 1900 and the Baschurch Home was "declared open and ready to receive four little boys and four little girls needing country air and good food."

As Agnes Hunt writes in her autobiography, "the Home exerted a magnetic attraction for cripples, for whom it was in no way suited." By 1901 there were 20 patients, some of whom found it difficult to navigate the steep staircase to the wards. The decision was therefore made to build a shed, open on one side, in the garden to house the children unable to walk, as the benefits of fresh air and sunshine were well-known. In this way the principle of open-air treatment was established. This became a hallmark of the Home, and continued for many years after the hospital was established on its present site.

In 1903 Agnes Hunt's health broke down and she went to Liverpool to consult well-known orthopaedic surgeon Robert Jones. A year later he agreed to become Honorary Surgeon to the Baschurch Home, thus raising the Home's status from convalescent home to surgical hospital, and in 1907 the first operating theatre was built at a cost of £249 3s 11d. Older patients were also gradually admitted, and when war broke out in 1914, Agnes Hunt offered the Home's services to the War Office for the treatment of military patients, though children also continued to be admitted. In 1917 the Home became the Shropshire Surgical Home and Auxiliary Military Orthopaedic Hospital Baschurch, and on Robert Jones's orders, as Inspector of Military Orthopaedics, received cases straight from the trenches. In 1918 alone, the daily average of patients was 99 soldiers and 101 civilians.

In 1919 the British Red Cross Society and the Shropshire War Memorial together donated £34,000 to rebuild or move the hospital. With this money, Park Hall Military Hospital near the town of Oswestry was purchased from the Government, and converted into an open-air hospital of 320 beds, to be known as the Shropshire Orthopaedic Hospital. All patients had been transferred there by 1 February 1921.

The original Baschurch Home still stands in the centre of the village. In later years it became a residential home for the elderly, and was subsequently converted into private apartments. A wall plaque on the outside of the building records the founding of the Home in 1900.

Sources

1. *Hunt, Agnes. This is my life. London: Blackie, 1938. Reprinted by the League of Friends to the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust, 2000*
2. *Hunt, A.G. The story of Baschurch. Oswestry: Caxton Press, [1925]*
3. *Carter, Marie. Healing & hope: 100 years of 'The Orthopaedic'. Oswestry: The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust, 2000*
4. *Hospital Annual Report 1917, 1918*