

BOOK REVIEW

The Royal Army Medical Corps in the Great War: Rare Photographs from Wartime Archives *by Timothy McCracken*

Paperback, 192 pages
Pen & Sword Books
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When reading books on the medical aspects of the First World War one tends to see the same collections of photographs used repeatedly, but what McCracken sets out to do is to focus more on the individuals of the medical services. This he does by using an extensive collection of previously unpublished group photographs of medical units, postcards and images of individuals.

Although the title suggests the book is about the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), the author has also included members of the military nursing services and the voluntary organisations, such as the ladies of the Voluntary Aid Detachments. The book is divided into chapters covering the United Kingdom, France and Belgium, and under Global War, the other theatres of conflict where the medical services found themselves providing care.

This is not just a collection of war images; many of them are accompanied by extensive captions explaining who the individual was, where he served and other career details. This makes the photographs all the more personal and helps bring the characters to life. Many of the photographs show the lighter side of life at war such as unit sports teams, some of the illustrations include sketches taken from unit magazines and journals, and there are postcards sent home to families.

This book achieves its aim of focusing on the individual more than the general side of the medical services at war, and it does that admirably but, as such, you will not find photographs of the RAMC tending wounded in the front line. It shows the reader that the men of the RAMC who went out into No Man's Land and rescued the wounded under fire, earning an enormous number of gallantry awards doing so, were not supermen but just normal human beings thrust into a war to bring succour to the sick and wounded.

The Royal Army Medical Corps in the Great War is highly recommended for those interested in the military medical services.

Pete Starling
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