

**Bertha Mary CORNELL**  
**Research notes**

Presented are medals and memorabilia,  
once the possessions of Bertha ("Bert") Mary CORNELL

QSA; KSA Nursing Sister B.M. **Cornell**; 1914-15 Star S/Nurse B.M. Cornell  
**Q.A.I.M.N.S.R.**; BWM; AVM (Brit) Sister B.M. Cornell; Queen Alexandra  
Military Nursing Service Reserve Medal.

*Sold with an original nursing cape; original Membership certificate (No. R400) of the  
Army Nursing Reserve dd. 9 March 1900; original Passage document to board the  
Hospital Ship "Essequibo" at Belfast for 14 November 1915; pension document;  
invitation to meet H.R.H. The Prince of Portugal; a quantity of contemporary Boer and  
WWI nursing photographs including several of the recipient.*



Court-mounted medals of Sister Bertha Mary Cornell

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Writing a definitive biography of Bertha ("Bert") Mary CORNELL at this stage is practically impossible. However, that which follows is an expansion on the auction catalogue description above, presented in the hope that, with time, greater detail will surface sufficient to fill the very evident historical gaps.

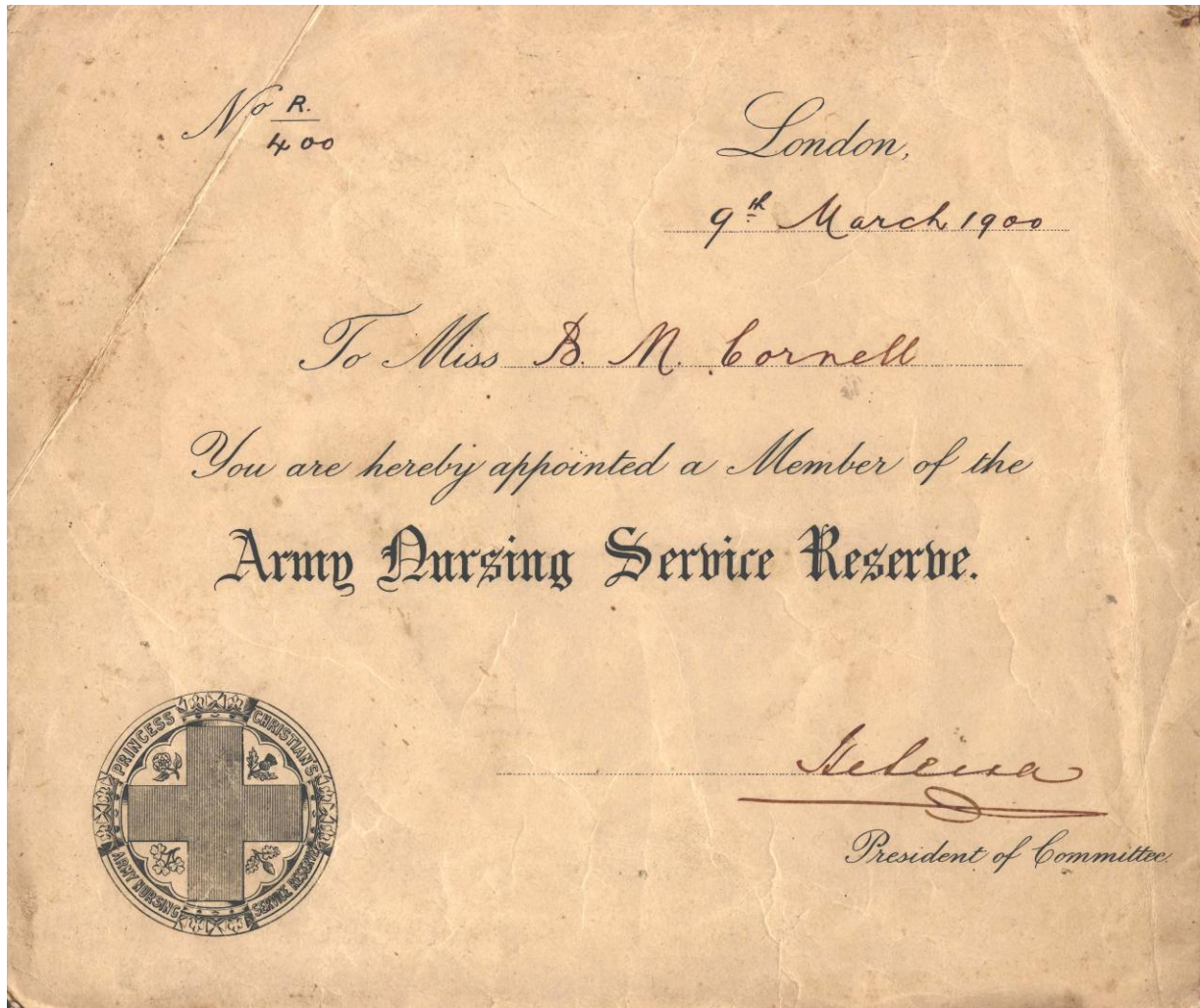
## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bertha ("Bert") Mary CORNELL was born Saffron Walden, Essex 21 September 1872. She was one of 7 children born to William Cornell, a basket maker, and Ellen NN. The 1881 census of England and Wales has her living with her family in the village of Wethersfield in Essex, and attending school.

At some stage, she enrolled for nurses' training at the West London Hospital, Hammersmith, London. Two photographs<sup>i</sup> in the collection date from that time.



On 9 March 1900, she was appointed to the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Services Reserve (No. R 400) <sup>ii iii</sup> and the South African Field Force <sup>iv</sup>.



Certificate of Membership: Princess Christian's Army Nursing Services Reserve (No. R 400)

I have found no evidence of when or how she travelled to South Africa. Presumably she disembarked in Cape Town for military nursing records indicate that she first reported to No.1 General Hospital, Wynberg in July 1901. However, it is known that her one brother, Stanley Thomas Cornell, joined the Imperial Light Infantry in 1899 <sup>v</sup> and she therefore may have disembarked in Durban some time earlier intent on visiting him <sup>vi</sup>.





Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve Medal

Two weeks later, she reported to No.8 General Hospital, Bloemfontein.



No. 8 General Hospital, Bloemfontein: "my ward staff"

Undated photographs amongst her possessions suggest that she served at the Naval Hill Military Families' Hospital, Bloemfontein;



Naval Hill Military Families' Hospital, Bloemfontein





Cabinet Photograph Deale Bros.,<sup>vii</sup> Bloemfontein 1901  
Sr B M Cornell is wearing the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service Reserve badge at her throat.

Over a period of time, she travelled via Bloemhof, to the Camp Hospital, Pietersburg <sup>viii</sup>



Pietersburg, Transvaal: Concentration Camp Hospital





the Families' Military Hospital, Roberts' Heights (later Voortrekkerhoogte), Pretoria





Families' Military Hospital, Roberts' Heights, Pretoria  
and the Kleinfontein Mine Hospital, Benoni, Transvaal.



Kleinfontein Mine Hospital Nursing Staff

Amongst her possessions is an invitation she received from the then Governor, Lord Selborne, to meet the visiting Prince Royal of Portugal in August 1907<sup>ix</sup>, the significance of which is obscure.



We next get a sense of where she applied her skills for amongst her possessions are a number of undated photographs relating to World War I.

There is an undated series of photographs depicting Reading War Hospital No.5, Katesgrove <sup>x</sup>.



Reading War Hospital No.5, Katesgrove



Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to—  
The Secretary,  
War Office,  
London, S.W.,  
and the following number quoted.—  
Q. M. G. 2.  
3.  
128/G N/4869

*Amended Orders*  
WAR OFFICE,  
LONDON, S.W.,  
11th November 1915

SIR, Madam  
Passage to the Mediterranean Sea having been provided for you on board the Hospital Ship "Essequibo" I am directed to request that you will proceed to Belfast and embark in the above vessel on the 14. 11. 1915 by 11 o'clock p.m., reporting yourself, in service dress (or address) uniform, before embarking, to the Military Staff Officer superintending the embarkation at the dock.

You are entitled to conveyance by sea of 15 cubic feet (3 cwt.) of baggage.

No package labelled "Change of Clothing" is to exceed 1 cwt. in weight, and the number allowed is limited to one per individual.

If entitled to conveyance of baggage to the port of embarkation, the quantity carried at the public expense will be that laid down in paragraph 470(a), Allowance Regulations.

Government accepts no responsibility for damage or loss as regards private baggage. Passengers desirous of protecting themselves against loss of private baggage, should do so by insurance.

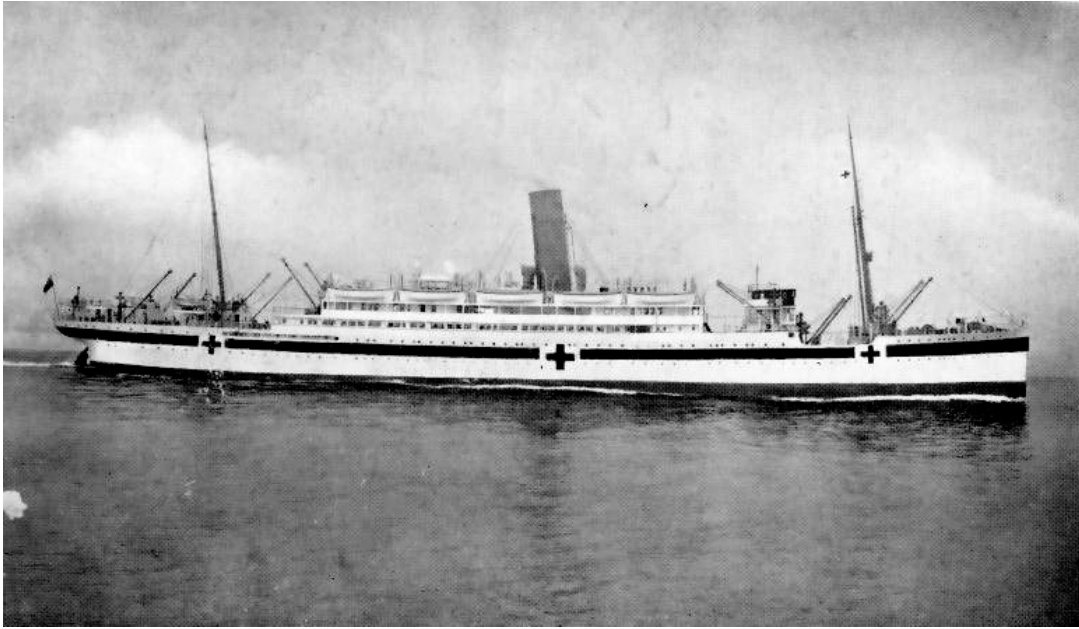
The rules governing indemnification for loss of military equipment are laid down in Section 19, Allowance Regulations (with its schedules).

I am further to request you will acknowledge the receipt of this letter, by first post, on the attached form, and inform me of any change in your address up to the date of embarkation.

I am,  
SIR, Madam  
Your obedient Servant,  
R. Smart-Walker

Miss B. M. Cornell.  
Bill Street.

11



HMHS Essequibo



"My ward where I have been nursing all the poor wounded soldiers"





"My orderlies": a greetings card signed by Gordon Taylor, Frederick Neuman, Edwin Nightingale



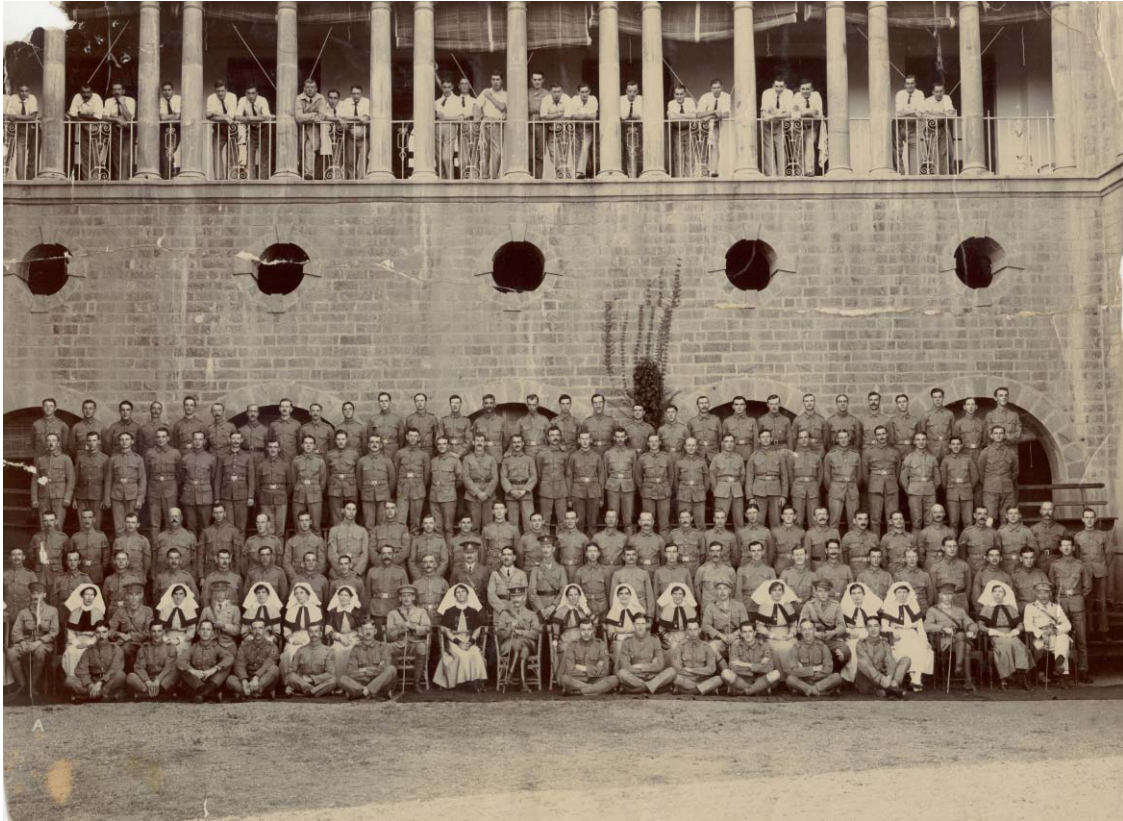
HMHS Essequibo & the ill-fated HMHS Salta <sup>xii</sup> meet up

The next series of pictures relates to the Deccan British War Hospital, Kirkee<sup>xiii</sup>, Poona. Though they are undated, I suspect that this is where she did her next tour of duty.



Views of the Deccan War Military Hospital circa 1918





Staff of the Deccan War Memorial Military Hospital



Detail of that above: Bertha Mary Cornell on right wearing Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve Medal. Matron is wearing Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Medal.

In later years, as a War Veteran Pensioner <sup>xiv</sup>, she and her three sisters lived in East London, South Africa; Bertha Mary, Katherine Judith and Lois Eva Collier sharing a home.

Bertha Mary Cornell died on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1959 in Bryanston, Johannesburg whilst visiting her niece. She was buried in East London <sup>xv</sup>.

## **CORNELL FAMILY TREE** <sup>xvi</sup>

1 William CORNELL b. c. 1841 Wethersfield, Essex, England m. Ellen CORNELL b.c. 1843 Coggeshall, Essex, England

1.1 Bernard CORNELL bc 1867 Saffron Walden, Essex d<1948

1.2 Miriam Martha CORNELL b. c. 1868 Saffron Walden, Essex d. East London, South Africa 26 February 1946 [MOOC 6/9/12924.2606/46](#) m. Australia James Fred MANNING d. 1910 [TAB MHG 17118](#) No offspring. Lived Jarvis Road, Berea, East London.

1.3 Ellen Edith CORNELL b. c. 1870 Saffron Walden, Essex d. 1958 Regents Park, Johannesburg [TAB MHG 7978/58](#) m. Daniel Gough MULDOON [TAB MHG 45854](#)

1.3.1 Guy Dion Muldoon m. Elsie

1.3.1.1 Lorna Frances Muldoon

1.3.1.2 David Guy Muldoon

1.3.1.3 Yvonne Clair Muldoon

1.3.2 Roy Cornell Muldoon

1.3.2.1 Gough Christopher Muldoon

1.4 Anne E. CORNELL b.c. 1871 Saffron Walden, Essex

1.5 Bertha Mary CORNELL 21 September 1872 Saffron Walden, Essex d. 4 July 1959 Bryanston, Johannesburg, living in East London, South Africa [MOG 1/1/681.1746.61 ; MHG 4790/59](#)

1.6 Katherine Judith CORNELL b. c. March 1877 Saffron Walden, Essex d. unmarried 29 June 1948 East London, South Africa [MOOC 6/9/15140.3343](#)

1.7 Stanley Thomas CORNELL b. c. 1878 Saffron Walden, Essex d. Leslie, Transvaal

1.8 Lois Eva CORNELL b. c. November 1882 Weatherfield d. East London, South Africa 17 January 1952 unmarried. [Left usufruct of house to BMC. MOOC 6/9/19236.353](#)

1.8.1 Judith Elizabeth Cornell by adoption b. 8 November 1931 m. R C Urquhart

Relationships with BMC that are not clearly defined:

Niece Lois Eva Blevin b. Cornell m. Alwyn Harold BLEVIN

Niece Ada Florence Burnett b. Cornell

Edwin Everett, son of Ada Florence Burnett b. Cornell

Niece Edna Scott b. Cornell

Niece Bertha Derby b. Cornell

Nephew Stanley Thomas Cornell

John Oliver Cornell

Annie E Munro

Relationships with KJC that are not clearly defined:

Archer Cornell d<1948

Edward Cornell d<1948

Stanley Cornell



## REFERENCES:

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2. **National Archives of South Africa (NASA).** TAB MHG Reference 4790/59 Cornell, Bertha Mary. 1959
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5. **The Shipping List.** <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/pacific.html>
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8. **Nurses of the Great War: the Roses of No-Man's Land in Word and Image-a Collection of Illustrations and Texts**  
[http://www.greatwardifferent.com/Great\\_War/Great\\_War\\_Nurses/Nurse\\_Index\\_00.htm](http://www.greatwardifferent.com/Great_War/Great_War_Nurses/Nurse_Index_00.htm)
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<http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com/rm2.html>
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11. **Hospital ships and ambulance trains.** John H. Plumridge. Publ: London, Seeley, 1975. ISBN-13: 9780854220878 ISBN: 0854220879
12. **Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.** Juliet Piggott. Pub: Lee Cooper, London, 1975.
13. **The 1908 Lisbon Assassinations.** David Arthur Walters.  
<http://www.authorsden.com/visit/viewarticle.asp?AuthorID=23453&id=20495>
14. **A Checklist of South Africa Postcard Publishers to c.1930**  
<http://www.martin-nicholson.info>
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16. **The German Submarine War 1914-1918.** R.H. Gibson, Maurice Prendergast. Contributor Earl Jellicoe. Publ: Periscope Publishing Ltd., 2002. ISBN 1904381081, 9781904381082
17. **It's a Long Way to Tipperary: British and Irish Nurses in the Great War.** Yvonne McEwen. Publ: Cualann Press, 2006. ISBN-10: 0954441656, ISBN-13: 978-0954441654
18. **Nominal roll of the Imperial Light Infantry a colonial unit of the Boer War of 1899-1902.** WO 127, National Archives, Kew. Compiler Ted Beard.  
<http://www.britishmedals.us/files/127ili.htm>
19. **Official History of the Canadian Forces in The Great War, 1914-1918: the Medical Services / Royal Canadian Naval Medical Service / Hospital Ships and**

- Enemy Action. SIR ANDREW MACPHAIL. F. A. ACLAND, Ottawa, 1925.  
Available to download at <http://www.gwpda.org/naval/rcnmed00.htm>
20. **The Armed Forces of South Africa 1659 – 1954.** Tylden, G, Major. City of Johannesburg Africana Museum Frank Connock Publication No.2. Facsimile Trophy Press, 1982.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

City Coins, Cape Town  
Emmerentia van Rensburg, Researcher, Pretoria

### **COMMENT:**



1. It is recognised that the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve Medal illustrated bears the Military General Service Medal ribbon and that the QSA is shown in the reverse. The correct ribbon is being sought whereafter the presentation will be revised.
2. Juliet Piggot illustrates 6 badges/medals: the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service Reserve badge, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Medal, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve Medal, Territorial Army Nursing Service Medal, Queen Alexandra's Military Families Nursing Service Medal and Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps Medal.

## END NOTES

i

Cabinet Photograph undated: G.T. Jones, 9 Surbiton Park Terrace, Kingston of Thames, S.W., London c. 1890's

Cabinet Photograph undated: Arthur Hollis, 45 Dalton Road, Barrow-in Furness, Lancashire. c. 1895.

ii

Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service (Reserve) Nominal Roll September 1990

The certificate (illustrated) is signed *Helena*, President of Committee. This was The Princess Helena Augusta Victoria, later by marriage Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (25 May 1846 – 9 June 1923); the third daughter and fifth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

iii

The Princess Christian Army Nursing Reserve was founded in March 1897 by H.R.H. Princess Christian and Mrs. Bedford-Fenwick in the Council Chamber of the Royal British Nurses' Association. The Army Nursing Service and another organised by The Princess of Wales provided nursing services during the Second Anglo-Boer War.

Following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, The Princess of Wales, now Queen Alexandra, insisted on replacing Helena as President of the Army Nursing Service; and on 27th March 1902, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service [QAIMNS] was established by Royal Warrant.

The 1907 Territorial and Reserve Forces Act led to the formation of QAIMNS Reserve and the Territorial Force Nursing Service (July 1908).

During the 1914-18, the various QAIMNS nursing services were mobilised and served in military hospitals and on hospital ships. In terms of the Geneva Convention, they should thus have avoided harm, but in point of fact many nurses lost their lives.

The Indian Nursing Service was inaugurated in 1888. In 1903, the name changed to the Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service for India [QAMNS(I)]. During the years of the British Raj, the nursing needs of the British Army and their families were met by the QAMNS(I). In 1926, this, together with the Military Families Nursing Service, was amalgamated with the QAIMNS by the War Office.

British Raj Military Hospitals included the British Military Hospital Ambala the Punjab, Delhi Military Hospital, Military Hospital Kasauli, Mody Khana Military Hospital, Station Hospital Bareilly, Station Hospital Rhaniket. I have found no reference to the Deccan British War Hospital, Kirkee.

iv

The Second Anglo-Boer War was fought 11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902  
Ref: Keiron Spirens QVRM TD <http://www.pcansr.net>

Serial Page	Grade	Forenames	Surname	Service	Place	Date
A0021 / 2	Sister	Bertha Mary	CORNELL	ANSR	No.1 General Hospital, Wynberg	14 July 1901
A0494 / 55	Sister	Bertha Mary	CORNELL	ANSR	No.8 General Hospital, Bloemfontein	4 August 1901

v

The Imperial Light Infantry was raised in Pietermaritzburg in 1899, Officer Commanding Col. Nash. Most of the recruits were former inhabitants of Johannesburg. In the Nominal roll of the Imperial Light Infantry [WO 127], the following appears:  
Cornell, Stanley L/Cpl No. 479.

vi

Her siblings Miriam Martha MANNING née Cornell, Ellen Edith MULDOON née Cornell, Katherine Judith Cornell, Lois Eva Cornell and Stanley Thomas Cornell all emigrated to South Africa.



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vii Deale Bros., Bloemfontein were Arthur (d. 1933) and Samuel Frederick Deale (d. 1925). To-date they have received but passing mention in books devoted to photography in South Africa. Born in Dublin, Ireland, they appear to have established themselves c. 1893 as photographers and later as cinema proprietors and stationers, even producing their own postcards. Examples of Deale Bros. photography are housed in the National Library, Cape Town, the Albany Museum, and the State Archives Repositories, Cape Town & Bloemfontein.

viii

A Concentration Camp was established in Pietersburg during the Anglo-Boer War and is reported to have housed almost 4000 women and children

ix

H. M. Marie Amélie Hélène d'Orléans, Queen of Portugal (1865 - 1951) married When King Carlos of Portugal acceded to the throne of Portugal, his eldest son Infante D. Luís Filipe (1887-1908), prince of Beira - as the eldest son the Infante Duke Luís Filipe (1887-1908), prince of Beira, became the Prince Royal and Duke of Bragança. He was murdered together with his father on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1908 by republican radicals.

x

In 1915, Reading War Hospital No.1 (formerly Reading Union Workhouse and later Battle Hospital), and several local schools converted into branch hospitals, treated thousands of injured soldiers from the front lines in France and Belgium. Reading War Hospital No.5 or No.5 Katesgrove War Hospital, Reading was situated in the suburb of Katesgrove. It is well represented amongst her possessions by a collection of postcards created by Qualis Photo Coy, Fulham Rd, SW 6. [Nos.1237,1295,1296,1298,1300,1301].

Ref: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_Hospital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_Hospital)

xi

The following paraphrases the recorded history of ESSEQUIBO. It was built for Royal Mail Steam Packet Company by Workman Clark & Co. at Belfast, launched on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1914 and sailed her maiden voyage on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1914 under the command of Capt. J. C. Chevet. In 1915 she was acquisitioned as a hospital ship. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1917, she was stopped and inspected by U-54, then allowed to continue her voyage [see Im Gefecht(1)]. She was bought by Pacific Steam Navigation Company in 1922. In 1930, she was laid up until March 1935 when she was sold to Arcos Ltd and renamed Neva. She was removed from the Lloyds Register in 1957.

Ref: The Red Duster: a website owned and updated by The Merchant Navy Association  
[www.red-duster.co.uk/PSNC15.htm](http://www.red-duster.co.uk/PSNC15.htm)

Ref: Im Gefecht (1)

[http://www.u54.suedholland-ferienhaus.de/html/im\\_gefecht\\_1\\_.htm](http://www.u54.suedholland-ferienhaus.de/html/im_gefecht_1_.htm)

Ref: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk>

In the work of evacuating the sick and wounded to Canada, the Royal Canadian Naval Medical Service employed 5 hospital ships, which made an aggregate of 42 voyages. Amongst these was the "Essequibo" which made 9 Voyages and repatriated 5,106 patients.

Ref: History of the Canadian Forces: the Medical Services: Royal Canadian Naval Medical Service. Hospital Ships and Enemy Action. Sir Andrew Macphail  
<http://www.gwpda.org/naval/rcnmed00.htm>

xii

HMHS Salta was sunk on the 10 April 1917 with the loss of 52 lives including a Matron, 3 Sisters, 4 Staff Nurses, 5 officers and 37 other ranks of the RAMC.

xiii

Kirkee, Kirki or Khadki is a town in the Indian state of Maharashtra and lies just north of the city of Pune (Poona). A British India town and military cantonment established soon the Battle of Kirkee in 1817, it was home to the Royal Regiment of Artillery's 79 (Kirkee) Commando Battery. Its population in 1901 was some 10,797 persons.

Today, the Deccan War Military Hospital is The Agriculture College, Pune one of the most renowned & oldest colleges in the field of agriculture and biological research. It runs under the Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth.

<http://www.slimpp.com/slim2site/Clients/Agriculture.htm>

xiv

Office of the Commissioner of Pensions dated February 1950 granted an increase to the War Veteran Pension of BM Cornell of Baysville, East London backdated effective from April 1948.

xv

File MOG 1/1/681.1746.61, State Repository, Cape Town; and MHG 4790/59, State Archives Repository, Pretoria:

Death Notice:

Bertha Mary Cornell born England  
Parents unknown  
Born 21 September 1872 Age at death: 86 years and 10 months  
Profession: Nursing sister  
Marital Status: unmarried  
Died 4 July 1959 at Bruton Road, Bryanston, Johannesburg of Coronary thrombosis  
Death Notice signed by RC Urquhart, husband of deceased's niece

Will:

She asked to be buried in plot 131/2 East London.

Heirs:

Niece by adoption Judith Elizabeth Urquhart born Cornell, daughter of sister Lois Eva Cornell

Niece Lois Eva Blren [sic] Blevin b. Cornell  
Ada Florence Burnett b. Cornell  
Edna Scott b. Cornell  
Bertha Derby b. Cornell  
Elsie Muldoon, wife of nephew Dion Guy Muldoon

Mrs Vilma Hofmann

Annie E Munro

Edwin Everett, son of niece Ada Florence Burnett b. Cornell

Estate was valued at £1,551/19/0

xvi

The district **Saffron W.** is an alternative name for **Saffron Walden** and it is in the county of **Essex**; information found Births/Marriage/Deaths Register Vol.4a, Pg.433

**Surname Given Name District Volume Page**

**Births Dec 1872 [21 September 1872]**

Cornell Bertha Mary Saffron W. 4a 433

1881 Household Census taken at Wethersfield, Essex, England.

Name	Relation	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
William CORNELL	Head	Male	40	Wethersfield, Essex, England	Basket Maker
Ellen CORNELL	Wife	Female	39	Coggeshall, Essex, England	
Bernard CORNELL	Son	Male	14	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	Basket Maker
Miriam [sic] CORNELL	Daughter	Female	13	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	((Sch))
Ellen E[dith]. CORNELL	Daughter	Female	11	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	Scholar
Anne E. CORNELL	Daughter	Female	10	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	Scholar
Bertha M[ary]. CORNELL	Daughter	Female	8	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	Scholar
Kathline [sic] Judith CORNELL	Daughter	Female	5	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	Scholar
Stanly [sic] T[homas]. CORNELL	Son	Male	3	Saffron Walden, Essex, England	