

163rd U.S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL

The land for the site, located beside the old A14 on the west side of the Estate, was requisitioned from the owner of Wimpole Hall Mrs Elsie Bambridge in 1943 for Thirty three pounds, eight shillings and tuppence per annum. (£33.41p for our younger readers!). The buildings were finally demolished and the site cleared in 1960.

The personnel and equipment that formed the 163rd U.S. Army Hospital, under the command of Lt. Col. John H Leshner, arrived at Wimpole on 7th September 1944 and the Hospital was ready to admit patients on 5th October. Its classification of 'General Hospital' reflected its size, 1000 Beds, 662 Officers and Enlisted Men and it was the last U.S. Army hospital to be opened in East Anglia, as well being the last to close.

The 163rd controlled the Ambulance Train Reception facility at Meldreth and casualties resulting from the European Theatre of Operations were received until late 1945.

Following VE Day the U.S. Forces in East Anglia started repatriation to the USA and commenced closing their bases. The 163rd also became the assembly area, from the other eight US Army Hospitals in the immediate area, for the patients being sent to the 'Zone of Interior' (i.e. United States). The hospital closed in early 1946 when it was no longer required.

Derek Stewart