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HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN AT THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST
EQUINE RESEARCH STATION

OPENING OF THE GLADYS YULE SURGICAL WING

In 1946 the Animal Health Trust leased Lady Yule's stables at Balaton Lodge, Newmarket, at a "peppercorn" rent and converted loose boxes into laboratories. So was born the first and only veterinary research station specialising entirely in the causes and curing of illness in horses. From this humble start the Equine Research Station has grown steadily, acquiring an international reputation and becoming a place of pilgrimage for veterinary surgeons who come to study its work from as far away as Australia and Japan. On 29th September, H.M. The Queen, Patron, of the A.H.T., opens the Station's new Gladys Yule Surgical Wing, and

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Her Majesty's presence is a good indication of how important is the event. For it will now be possible to carry out complex equine surgery under conditions hardly bettered in human hospitals.

Architects and Veterinary Surgeons Co-operate

The new wing is named after the late Miss Gladys Yule, who in 1956 generously made over Balaton Lodge to the A.H.T. as an out-right gift, and whose financial support made the new building possible. The architects, who also designed the A.H.T.'s Farm Livestock Research Station, worked in collaboration with William C. Miller, M.R.C.V.S., F.R.S.E., Director of the Equine Research Station, and E. James Roberts, M.R.C.V.S., Head of the Station's clinical department. The result is this unique, functional building, designed and equipped to solve the many problems peculiar to surgery on horses.

Says Mr. Roberts: "Up to now in general practice operations on horses had to be carried out in a paddock or, in particularly tricky cases, in a converted loose box. You get some idea of the change if you compare a field operation on a wounded soldier to one carried out in a modern teaching hospital. To say the least, the latter has certain advantages!"

By Overhead Hoist to Hydraulic Operating Table

Built as an entirely self-contained unit, the new wing has everything necessary to ensure the maximum

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comfort and speedy recovery of the animal patient. Focal point is the operating theatre itself, where with its adjacent washing and sterilising rooms, rigid aseptic conditions prevail.

The horse requiring surgery is first tranquilised by injection, then anaesthetised in a padded loose box from which it is carried unconscious by electrically controlled overhead hoist to the operating table. The latter is hand built, an improved version of a table supplied to Bristol University, and is perhaps the most remarkable - certainly the most dramatic - piece of equipment in the wing. Electro-hydraulically operated and controlled from a wall panel, it can be raised from the floor to a height of nearly 5 feet, tilted any angle from the vertical. This means that every part of the horse may be made easily accessible to the surgeon.

The anaesthetic equipment is also unique, the first production model of a machine specially designed for use in equine surgery by the immediate past President of the British Veterinary Association, Glasgow University's Professor F. Jennings, M.R.C.V.S. It was rushed to the Station for the Queen's visit. While on the table the horse breathes a constantly circulated and purified mixture of oxygen and gas - a far safer method of "keeping him under" than any other yet devised.

Recovery

After his operation the horse is once again gently picked up by the overhead hoist and carried to one of

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two padded "recovery boxes". Says Mr. Roberts, who will personally supervise all major operations in the new wing: "One of the hazards we used to be up against was that of the animal injuring himself as he came out of anaesthesia. The most dangerous and straining moment was when he tried to get up. Now we can put him on his feet fully conscious, then leave him to recover in his padded box where he cannot come to any harm".

Diagnosis and Treatment in the New Wing

The Gladys Yule Surgical Wing was principally designed so that equine operations already perfected can be carried out with every possible chance of success, and to allow new life-saving surgical techniques to be developed. But for the diagnosis of complex cases and for treatment other than surgical, the wing also has facilities unrivalled elsewhere.

As at other A.H.T. centres, the clinical department can make full use of the laboratories and their attendant experts. "Here", says Mr. Roberts, "We are also equipped for X-ray examination, electro-cardiography; electro-stethoscopy and ophthalmoscopy. In particular at the Equine Research Station ultra-sonic irradiation has been applied and is being developed, using equipment which many human hospitals do not yet have."

Ambulance Needed

Shortage of funds however, prevents the Station from adding a vitally necessary piece of equipment -

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an ambulance. This would enable casualty and other emergency cases to be rushed to surgery. Currently the Station is forced to hire a horse-box for every patient, a time wasting and costly procedure.

What Kind of Patient

The pure research of the Station's laboratories has already yielded results of immediate practical value, particularly in the field of foal care and rearing. And the clinical department has frequently restored to active service racehorses worth thousands of pounds - animals which otherwise may have had to be destroyed.

The Station only receives a horse at the request of the attending veterinary surgeon and will then only accept it for treatment following examination if the diagnosis indicates that "hospitalisation" is necessary. The Station's clinical services have long been under heavy pressure and even before opening the Gladys Yule Surgical Wing has had several patients, one a horse brought all the way from Australia.

The Animal Health Trust believes that within a very short time the problem will be to find money for needed extra staff and equipment, so that the facilities of the new wing may be even further expanded.

Animal Health Trust

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