

The registration and intimation forms that were required under the National Registration Act 1915 make up a sizeable part of the collection.⁷ These differ from the earlier surveys as the information was sought directly from the individuals concerned and not from local committees. These forms were sent to every doctor in the country and the information gathered included whether the doctor had already served in the Royal Army Medical Corps or was intending to serve. Such information provides a valuable genealogical resource for anyone with ancestors who were doctors.

A complication arose in 1916 with the passing of the Military Service Act which provided for compulsory military service for all single men between the ages of 18 and 40. Initially doctors were uncertain whether this applied to them but clarification eventually came in March with an Army Instruction allowing that any practitioner who had registered as willing to accept a commission could not be called up. This also served to encourage those doctors who had not yet registered to send in their form.

Another general call up came in April 1917 but the Committee successfully negotiated with the War Office for a smaller number of doctors (Figure 2). Statements showing the number of doctors resident in each area also provided the number of patients per doctor in the different divisions.⁸ The small number of doctors explained why the Committee was so concerned about the impact of a general call up on medical provision for the public.

Under an extension of the Military Service Act, the Emergency Committee also took on a tribunal role for appeals by practitioners. Doctors appealing their call up could fill out an application for exemption.⁹ Although not

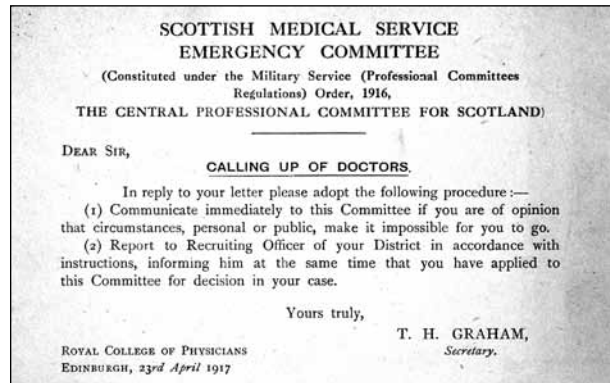


FIGURE 2 Advisory card for calling up of doctors.¹⁰

every doctor appealed, for those who did, these forms provide further information to complement the registration form.

Armistice came in November 1918 by which time 2,349 Scottish civilian practitioners had served in the forces. The process of demobilisation began. The Committee was keen to prioritise the release of doctors to areas where the shortage was most severe. Local War Committees were also encouraged to make their own cases for the return of practitioners, particularly those who had worked in hospitals or in public office. The result was the lists of officers selected for priority release which were sent to the Ministry of National Service at the end of the year.¹¹ Although releasing doctors on a priority basis was not always practical, the War Office did take notice of the Committee's lists. As demobilisation continued, the Committee realised that it no longer had a role to play and it was dissolved on 31 December 1919.

– A Scott, Archivist

REFERENCES

- 1 *British Medical Association War Emergency Committee divisional returns*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/2.
- 2 *Schedules of medical strength*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/3.
- 3 *Correspondence with the secretaries of the local war committees*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/2/2.
- 4 *Suggested form of announcement*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/4/1/35.
- 5 *IV - individual cases*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/6/2/4.
- 6 *Lists of doctors*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/7/3.
- 7 *Registration and intimation forms*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/4/1.
- 8 *Statements showing the number of doctors resident in each area*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/6.
- 9 *Applications for exemption*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/4/5.
- 10 *Advisory card for calling up of doctors*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/4/1/39.
- 11 *List of officers selected for priority release*. Collection of the Scottish Medical Service Emergency Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, SMC/3/9/1.