

Sergeant JOHN GRIFFITHS sworn and examined. (No. 33.)

378. *The Chairman.*] Will you tell us your name, please?—John Griffiths.
379. What contingent were you with?—The Eighth.
380. What was your rank?—Hospital sergeant, sir.
381. Were you on board the “*Britannic*”?—Yes, sir.
382. Did you come here to make complaints or to give evidence, or what is your position?—I came here to be examined.
383. *Mr. McNab.*] As hospital sergeant, what were your duties?—To look after the hospital, and to see that the orders of the medical officers were carried out.
384. Did you have that duty during the whole of the voyage?—Yes, sir.
385. Did your duties relate to the hospital only, and nothing else?—The hospital only, sir.
386. Had you charge of the orderlies in the hospital?—Yes, sir.
387. How many orderlies had you under you?—Fourteen.
388. Had you this fourteen all the way across, or did you increase the number?—We increased the number.
389. What did it commence with?—There were eight.
390. And then you rose to fourteen?—Yes, sir. I was not counting myself in the fourteen; I made fifteen.
391. Do you remember the time when the hospital had to be increased in size?—Yes, sir—the day after we left Melbourne.
392. Well, up to that date how many orderlies had you?—It was about Albany when we increased the number of orderlies.
393. At Albany how many orderlies had you—I would like to know particularly how many you had at Albany?—Ten, sir.
394. Do you remember how many patients you had?—We had about sixteen there.
395. You had one orderly to every one and a half patients?—Yes, sir.
396. Do you remember Trooper Gardiner being in the hospital?—No, sir, I do not. We had so many patients I do not remember their names.
397. By whose orders was it that the number of orderlies was to be increased at any time?—By my own request to the surgeon-major. I appealed to the surgeon-major for more orderlies, and got them.
398. Did you ever appeal to the surgeon-major and not get them?—No, sir.
399. You were perfectly satisfied yourself that there were plenty of orderlies?—There were not plenty. There were no more trained men. They used to get in each other's road.
400. With the men that were available you would say that you took full advantage of the men that were available for hospital orderlies?—Yes, sir.
401. And, so far as the hospital orderlies were concerned, do I understand you to say that you do not think you could have increased the efficiency more than you did?—No, sir.
402. There was never any limitation put upon you in regard to making an appointment?—No, sir.
403. When you arrived at Wellington here you then had fourteen orderlies?—Yes, sir.
404. Were they able to cope with the work that was on hand then?—Some of the orderlies were detailed off for duties which had no reference to the hospital, such as bringing down food.
405. Were they able to cope with the work right up to the day when you had the maximum number in the hospital?—They coped with the work until the measles broke out.
406. What date was that when the measles broke out?—It was the date of our leaving Melbourne.
407. You do not think you could have increased the efficiency of the staff?—No, sir. Had we had more down there it would have been useless.
408. What was your previous experience in connection with superintending an hospital?—Bearer-company work in Nelson, sir. I had some experience, too, in the work with the Second Contingent.
409. Did any of the men in the hospital complain to you about the attendance?—No, sir, not until the measles broke out.
410. Then, what was the nature of their complaints?—They would complain if their wants were not immediately attended to.
411. Naturally, I suppose sick men are impatient?—Yes, sir, very much so.
412. You had a number of pneumonia patients?—Yes, sir.
413. I suppose these men were always crying out for something to drink?—Yes, sir. Pneumonia patients were always attended to first. They had nothing to complain of. They never complained to me at all.
414. You were satisfied that the best was done that could be done with the men in the hospital?—Yes, sir.
415. And that you were never restricted in your applications for orderlies?—No, sir.
416. In regard to the food sent down to the hospital, was it satisfactory?—Yes, sir, in every way. Our food was cooked in the saloon galley, and we got everything we wanted.
417. Did you ever hear any man in the hospital complain about some peculiar smell in the hospital?—No, sir.
418. You never heard that complaint before?—No, sir.
419. *Mr. Millar.*] Do you remember Trooper Brown being in the hospital?—No, sir; I can remember no Trooper Brown. We had a Bugler Brown in the hospital, but that might not be the one.
420. I mean Trooper Brown that was sent to Somes Island?—I do not remember.
421. Had you any very serious cases upon arrival in Wellington which were sent to hospital?—Yes, they were serious, but by no means dangerous. We did not consider them so then.